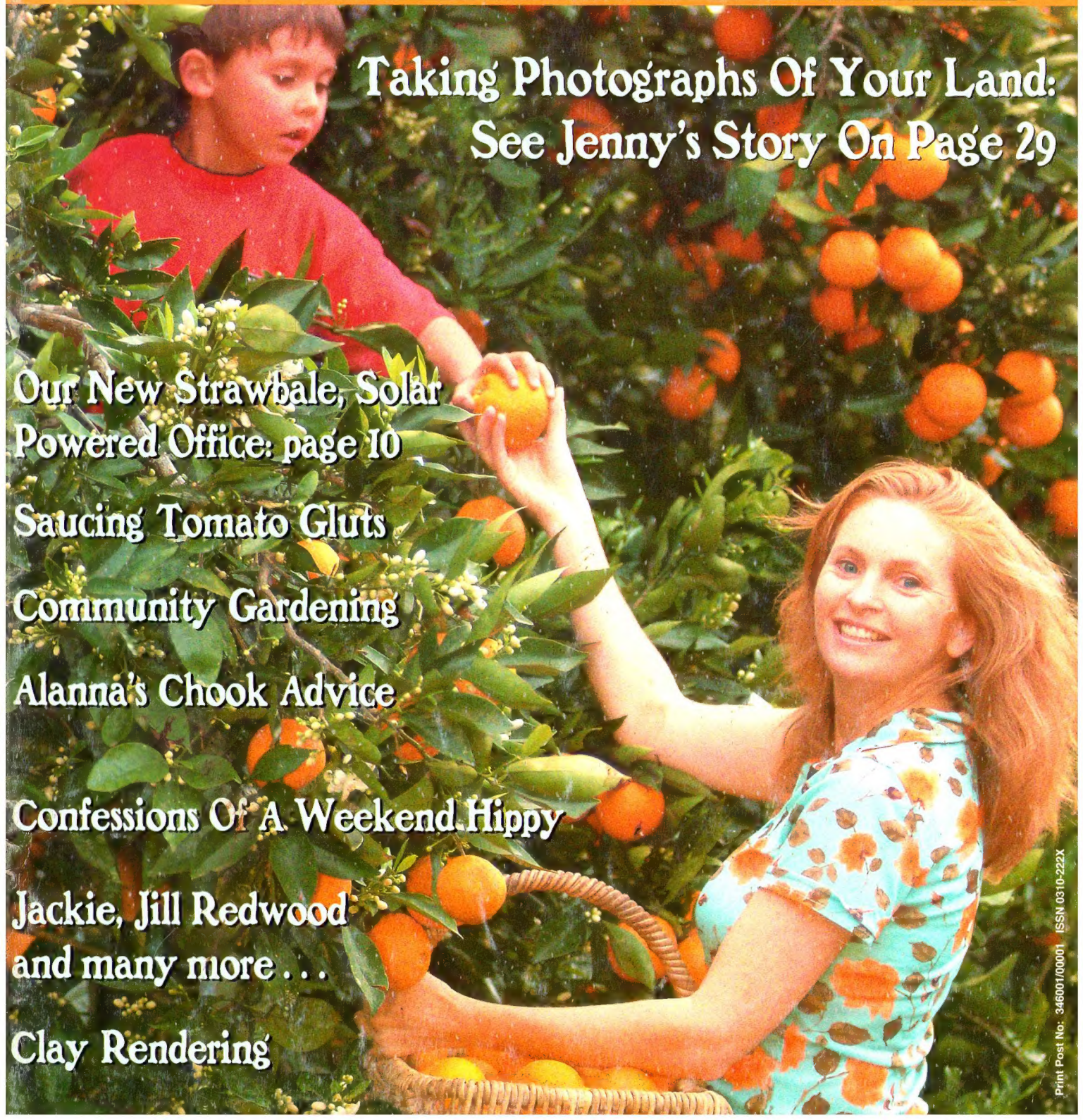


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EARTH GARDEN

- FOR BUSH OR CITY ALTERNATIVES -



Taking Photographs Of Your Land:
See Jenny's Story On Page 29

Our New Strawbale, Solar
Powered Office: page 10

Saucing Tomato Gluts

Community Gardening

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Front Cover: Snap! Take beautiful photos of your land and treasure the memories forever. Jenny Allen caught here by her partner, Dean Cameron, gathering ripe oranges with a young friend on her permaculture property in Queensland. Read Jenny's article about how and why to take great pictures of your property, starting on page 29.

— SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND PLANET CARE —
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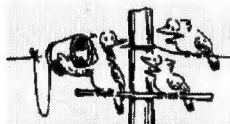
Number 134
December 2005 – February 2006

EcoTax: this issue's EcoTax will go to the Western Australian environment group, Environs Kimberley, to help with their ongoing work in assessing — and sometimes challenging — applications by mining companies throughout the Kimberley region. The current mining boom in WA means that Environs Kimberley is flat out trying to modify mining proposals to make their impact less damaging to the sensitive Kimberley landscape. For more information about donating to EK, or to join this super-active group, visit their website at: www.environskimberley.org.au.



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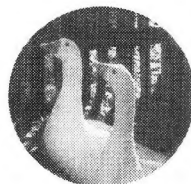


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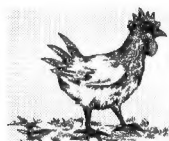
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Founded by Keith & Irene Smith, 1972.

EARTH GARDEN is Australia's original journal of sustainable living and alternatives. It is a forum of practical ideas, shared knowledge, sources and a guide to alternatives to high-consumption lifestyles.

It's about putting a roof over your head, growing your own food organically, aiming for appropriate, renewable home energy systems and surviving — and thriving — in the city or the bush, with the inner changes which follow when you're in harmony with Nature.

EcoTax: each issue we donate a portion of the cover price to a community group involved in conservation or social justice projects to help balance the use of the partly recycled paper used for printing *Earth Garden*. We would like to see all publishers pay an EcoTax.

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Contributions to *Earth Garden* are welcome: sharing information and experiences with other readers strengthens the network of Earth Gardeners. Photos and illustrations are important. Please write first with your story idea. Subscribers are sustainers: for subscription details see page 80.

We welcome advertisements appropriate to the aims and ideals of *Earth Garden*, but reserve the right to refuse ads at our discretion. Contact us for display rates.

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(We don't have the resources to staff telephone enquiries: please write or fax.)



Beyond The Bitumen

Dear readers,

Welcome to the summer issue of *Earth Garden*. This is the really exciting time of year around here because, after an almost tropical spring of regular rain and warm weather, our vegie garden is bursting with life. In early October the whole family pitched in to turn our overgrown garden back into a thriving food patch. Last year we moved a relocated house onto a one acre paddock of grass by the forest on the edge of our little town. This is the second house I've relocated, and Judith remarked recently that we've only ever lived in relocated houses in our 13-odd years of marriage — "We're trailer trash!" she says. Relocating this house puts us (financially) closer to building our dream strawbale, eco-friendly home, using a bit of wisdom we learned while building the new strawbale office this year.

The first job we did after moving the house was to fence a nice big vegie garden, prepare some garden beds and pin leaky hose over each of the beds, leading back to 'normal' hose and a garden tap on a timer. This has been a successful interim watering measure, and combined with heaps of mulch, has meant we don't need to water much. Last year we had a good yield of sweet corn, tomatoes, potatoes, and all the other usual summer vegie suspects.

This year we've planted summer vegies again — we usually don't bother planting much for winter because it's so cold and dark — and now we're enjoying that special delight of watching young plants struggle out of the soil as we prepare to mulch around them. We're usually pretty careful to observe the advice of *Earth Garden's* permaculture writer, Bruce Hedge, that in this cool district mulching too early keeps your soil cold. We may have planted a little early, but so far we've only had one (frost-inspired) disaster: my tomato plants died, so I'm way behind Karen in this year's ripe tomato competition. Sometimes I think I might just call off the whole idea: I don't think I've won once yet! Karen's been proudly bringing in the first ripe tomato to work for nearly ten years now. Whose idea was this competitive gardening anyway — bah. Peter Cundall once said in his column in *The Weekly Times* that this competitive urge to grow a ripe tomato before Christmas is just

a lot of macho nonsense. I'm inclined to agree with him . . . especially when I have such a lousy track record.

Just why is growing some of your own food in a home vegie patch so satisfying? When we asked readers of The Good Life Book Club this question a couple of years ago we were flooded with the most thoughtful and heartfelt reasons. None of these reasons seemed fashionable, trendy or 'marketable', yet we all know that growing some of our own food fulfills some basic human urges.

For me, the desire to grow vegies led me to move suburb 20 years ago from inner Melbourne Fitzroy to the rich alluvial soil of a backyard in Northcote. I can't imagine a summer without planting some vegies, and slowly my children seem to be developing the same habit. Harry,

Bertie, Woody and Adelaide all seem to be keen — but occasional — gardeners, and Tane, when he was younger, often enjoyed pottering with me in the vegie garden too. Experts tell us that giving our children a lifelong reading habit is a vital life skill, and I value a vegie gardening habit in the same way.

Longer, warmer, sunnier days also mean we can get started on a family project this year that we've been talking about for years and years: Bertie is dead keen to build an earth oven in the garden, and we're all determined to see his dream a reality before the autumn equinox is upon us.

Luckily we have previous issues of *Earth Garden* handy, and Doug, our advertising manager, has just finished building one with his family in Castlemaine. I think a quick visit to Doug's for a little hands-on inspiration is all we'll need to kick start the project.

There are lots of backyard and farmyard project ideas in this issue of *Earth Garden*. I hope you find a little inspiration, and whatever your motivation for growing a few vegies, if you get a chance to plonk some into a pot or patch of dirt, I hope you enjoy that too.

Happy reading,

Alan



Adelaide Gray picking ripe sweet corn in our vegie patch last summer.



Earth People Write is an open forum. The views expressed in letters from readers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Earth Garden*. Letters are always welcome, but please keep them concise.

The winner of *The Earth Garden Building Book* for our favourite letter writer in the last issue is Vlad, who emailed his letter. Vlad, please send us your mailing address so we can forward your prize. Our favourite letter writer in this issue will receive a copy of *The Earth Garden Water Book*.

Support for tigers of Rajasthan

Dear Earth Garden,

Greetings from Nirvanavan Foundation, Alwar, Rajasthan.

Sariska Tiger Reserve has been in the news for quite some time now. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry has revealed that all the tigers in the reserve have been poached. The main reason for the disappearance of the tiger has been insensitivity and callousness on the part of the park officials. Sariska Tiger Reserve faces many problems and these can be solved only with a greater political will. Nirvanavan Foundation has begun a signature campaign from 22 May for rehabilitation and conservation of tigers in Sariska Tiger Reserve. Volunteers of the Foundation are going door-to-door collecting signatures and suggestions of the people. We have set a target to take one lakh (100,000) signatures. This is also an exercise to know the perception of the people and their concern and their relationship with the tiger. Until now we have collected about 20,000 signatures. The suggestions will be compiled and presented to the Prime Minister to take necessary action.

Nirvanavan Foundation wishes to create a movement in Alwar city. The plan is to conduct street plays in every ward and poster painting competitions in every school, which will culminate in organizing a human chain letter in July–August. The volunteers of the Foundation will go to meet the Prime Minister on bicycles, which may turn into a cycle rally.

Dainik Bhaskar, a Hindi daily, and AIR Alwar is supporting this cause. I will be very happy if you could publish my letter in your magazine so that it can be shared with concerned individuals and organizations.

Looking forward to hearing from you.
Yours sincerely

Nirvana Bodhisattva, Chairperson
Nirvanavan Foundation, Director
Childline Alwar, Mahila Thana Campus,
Moti Dungri, Alwar. Tel, Childline
office: 0144-2337577, 2330812. Email:
alwartiger@rediffmail.com.

Jumping on the Tasmanian bandwagon!

Hi all Earth Gardeners,

We have decided to jump on the moving south road train and relocate our lives to Tasmania. The debates have been plenty and going on for years, but when the universe kicks you in the pants enough, you listen. So we are looking, as have so many before us, for your input and help in bringing our decision to fruition. We would like to hear your stories about the wonderful places of the southern state of Australia. Some general guidelines for what we are seeking in our new community: a place that is within 30 to 40 minutes drive of Hobart; has mountains and lakes; is relatively close to either a Steiner or Montessori primary school; has or is near a good health food or whole foods shop; is focused on community development and is open to people of spiritual backgrounds other than Christian.

We are both 30 years old and have no children yet. My hubby is a potter and I paint so an artsy place would be nice too, as would a yoga studio. If you know where this place would be in Tasmania **please contact us at jocamc@bigpond.com**. Thanks all in advance.

Recycling a pioneer house

G'day all,

Having been wwoofing for 14 weeks in NSW, Victoria, and the ACT (with plenty of stories and pictures). It is not very often I get all fired up about some-

where very special, and I must tell you. Wells Station Homestead, circa 1850s, (my era) WOW!, once had 3000 acres, ten kilometres from Canberra, and at present is in limbo. The Government owns the land, and has decided there aren't enough houses and land around and has resumed all but 80 of these acres for subdivision. Now being built on. On 12 November 2004 it was given an 'Entry to an Interim Heritage Place Register', which has recently been updated to full Heritage status.

It is one of the only early homesteads that has been built with all methods of construction, from pisé, lath and plaster, to slab timber walls, all in fair to good condition, and one of the only continuously working farms that is still tenanted.

This place must be preserved at all costs. I have the 16-page assessment papers from the Heritage Council, and on the last line on the last page it says "It also has strong potential as a teaching site".

This interested me immensely. All interests are being considered. Consensus is that if we get in early we can create a show-place for the teaching of a non-chemical lifestyle, methods of organic farming and natural healing, and is open for visits from the public, especially school children.

The tenants have lived there for 19 years, and are on side, and would welcome this kind of venture. I would put a lot of energy into a place like this. The final 80 acres is in a good position, ideally situated, plenty of water, and would have great tourist potential, to show the world what can be done.

A lot has to be done to start on a project of this magnitude; input is needed now to formulate a plan for this essential project for the future and our survival, that can be placed before the Heritage Council. Contact me.

Colin Statham, futurus87@hotmail.com.

Special place two

Dear readers,

Another special place. Whilst wwoofing at Stratford, Victoria, I was invited to 'Wollangarra', near Heyfield. It is a place for 14 to 18 year olds from schools around Melbourne. They stay for a week and experience activities they would not normally get, in a chemical-free environment.

To get to the property, after climbing over a stile in the fence at the locked front gate, you have to walk two kilometres to a flying fox. This crosses a river five metres above it, and only the brave venture further. This heightens one's awareness of the isolation, and is the only access.

'Wollangarra' is a replica homestead of the 1870s, in heavily wooded mountainous country. It is complete with outbuildings, a bunkhouse for 30 children, camping and hiking gear, and a vegetable garden.

All this was supervised by adults, and built by them and the children, over a period of years. Not slave labour, just hard work and loving it. I read the book on 'Wollangarra', (appropriately called, 'Secondhand and Solid'), about how and why the place was built, using 90 per cent recycled materials, all brought in by people power. It truly is an amazing story with plenty of pics.

Colin Statham, futurus87@hotmail.com.

Getting the priorities right

G'day to all at EG HQ,

First off I wanted to say how much we enjoy your magazine, so much so, that, now we have moved to our bush block, rolled the dice and gone for the self-sufficiency dream — or as close as we can get, it being an evolutionary kind of thing. EG has moved from the 'luxury' to 'necessity — level 2' part of the budget. That is a compliment by the way: it puts EG just below water, power, food and air: cell mates of bulk food buys, fresh milk over UHT, and out-of-season produce (ohh, and internet).

Struth, so many questions about so many things, I think I'll sum up my first two months of this possibly insane idea, thus: What do I ...? How do I ...? Why?... Yeah right!...Really!... Bugger... Should've done that, eah! Place an order for some back issues and say thank you, thank you thank you to everyone everywhere who is just as mad and has contributed to EG in any way at any time. What a resource.

Shaun, Majorca, Vic. somestra@hotmail.com.

Importing seed — the word from AQIS

Dear Earth Garden,

The letters section of your Winter 2005 issue advised a reader to source mus-

cadine grape seeds from the United States.

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is on alert for at least nine exotic viruses that could be introduced on grape seeds from the US. These viruses have had devastating effects on blueberries, peaches, raspberries, strawberries and tomatoes.

Importing seed without the protection provided by post-entry quarantine (which enables us to test for exotic diseases) could threaten Australia's agriculture industries and our unique seed bank of heritage and heirloom plants.

To protect Australia, AQIS requires grape seed from the US to be grown in quarantine for at least three months so plants can be screened for a range of diseases.

Some seed varieties can be imported without undergoing quarantine, but you must declare them. AQIS is now screening every international mail item coming into Australia.

Please — help us protect our unique environment and agriculture industries by doing the right thing.

For more information about importing seeds and other items, check out www.aqis.gov.au/icon or call AQIS in your State or Territory.

Peta Street, AQIS Victoria Region, Melbourne Airport, Vic.

EG back copies available

Dear Earth Garden,

We are having a pre-springclean and if any earth gardeners would like back copies of *Earth Garden* please contact me.

They are in *Earth Garden* plastic binders, in good condition, from 1984 to 2002. The numbers are: 43, 48, 51, 52, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70, 73, 74, 75, 76, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 94, 95, 97, 98, 100, 107, 119.

David Marnie, marnie@bordnet.net.au.

Holistic business knowledge needed

Dear Earth Garden,

In the next five years I plan to start an organic-based business. I hope to incorporate a number of different aspects within the venture to broaden business opportunities and create a holistic environment which supports healthy and environmentally friendly living.

This is all in the early stages of planning and I am only at the beginning of my own investigations and self-education.

I also realise that *Earth Garden* would have many valuable contacts that could help me with knowledge and suggestions for this project. At the moment I am basically a home gardener with an idea and a desire to spread organics and the wisdom of having a bit of involvement with what we eat. My mum was a dairy farmer when I was born so maybe it's a bit of blood showing. Many thanks for any help you can give me.

John Beesley, Brisbane, Qld, Email: beeso@mac.com. Phone: 0408 018 065.

Seeking bread making advice

Dear EG,

After years of buying *Earth Garden*, and a few of missing it, I bought a copy the other day and was rapt that there was a recipe for sourdough bread. I had been looking for a natural bread recipe for a while as I suffer from a mild yeast intolerance. I set about trying the recipe and made four great batches of bread. I, along with others that had tried it, loved it. Now the dilemma. The last couple of batches have failed to work. Following the same method as before, it just doesn't seem to want to work for me and I am at a loss to explain why it isn't working now.

I make the starter and all seems to be going well until I feed the starter for the first time. There doesn't seem to be any reaction occurring. I will persist with it until it works again. If anyone has any advice, I would surely appreciate it. Cheers,

Jim Jeffery, cabaloz@bigpond.net.au.

Bread making advice

Dear Jim,

It's been an odd time for starters for me too. They have a life of their own sometimes. A few things to check:

Is it smelling vinegary rather than yeasty? Sometimes a vinegar bacteria might have got in which will inhibit the growth of the yeast. Winter often slows down the rate at which the yeast organisms multiply — you could try it in a warmer place or wait a bit longer. Are you keeping a lump of dough from your bread? The starter will get stronger the more bread you make if you keep some dough and use it as the basis of your starter. This process also makes the starter less temperamental and vulnerable to other bacteria too.

When you knead the dough for the second time, keep aside a tennis ball-size piece of the dough. Sprinkle a generous amount of salt on the bottom of your two-cup measuring jug and place the dough on top. Sprinkle with flour. Place the muslin over this and keep until you are ready to start the starter.

It works best if you use it within a couple of weeks but it will keep for longer as long as it doesn't get too moist. If a mould develops on it discard and start again. Reactivate the starter by adding warm water and flour and leaving it to sit until it is frothy. Let me know if you still have no luck. Cath.

Is my detergent environmentally sound?

Hello everyone,

I've been reading *Earth Garden* for a long time now and have learnt many wonderful things over the years. I now need some advice and am sure some earth gardeners may be able to help with the answers. I have recently been given a recipe for a laundry detergent, which consists of half a cup each of borax, washing soda and grated Preserve soap, mixed with three tablespoons of eucalyptus oil diluted in nine litres of water. I made up a batch and shared it between our own, our sons' and daughters' households, and we were all pleased with the results. We now need to know how environmental this detergent is before we continue with its use.

Also, as our son is looking to converting his septic system to worm composting and hoping to run the grey water through this system, he needs to know how it could affect the worms. Hoping someone is able to give us some advice as we would really like to be able to use this solution rather than the expensive commercial detergents. If this mixture proves to be safe to use I will be happy to share the recipe with you all. Thank you *Earth Garden* for making such a wealth of information available through your treasure of a magazine. Kind regards,
Glenys Reid, M/S 413 Cainbale Ck. Rd, Kerry via Beaudesert 4285. Email: kerryvalleyglen@yahoo.com.au.

Rare native plant species for illustration

Dear Earth Garden,

I now live in the city but find beauty abundant in my own street while looking forward to returning to bush life.

On a recent adventure I collected a small sample of 'yate' for my sister, who is a botanic artist of renown. I am unable to return south in the near future to collect a larger sample, but would dearly love to obtain some further reference material for my sister's current project.

Anyone willing to forward samples of yate or mallee yate to me at G.S. Unit 19, 36 Ralph Street, Alexandria, NSW, 2015, will be duly rewarded, with inclusion of a return address.

I would also encourage people on the NSW central coast with rare native specimens to contact me or my sister if they would like to see these plants documented in my sister's beautiful watercolour work. To share your garden, email me at indradha@hotmail.com and I will forward your details to my sister, Heidi. Or, write to me at the postal ad-

dress given. Thanks, and enjoy.
Indra Thomas.

Straw and mudbrick houses: building and permits

Dear Sirs,

Love the *Strawbale Homebuilding* book. Can anyone give me information on straw and mudbrick houses? Also any information on how to apply for building and planning permits. I am hoping to build in Gippsland.

Ian Robinson, 8/209 Charman Road, Cheltenham, Vic. 3192.

Local lowdown on the Bundaberg area

Dear Earth Garden,

First time writer, long time reader. Thank you for a wonderful magazine. Hoping anyone in the Bundaberg area can offer some local information. Myself, husband and dog hoping to travel November with a view to moving there.

Type of information includes farms available (five to ten acres); soil types; price ranges; weather (for example, cold winters?); availability of organic produce; dog-friendly beaches/places to stay/camp. Any information would be appreciated.

Angela Wallace, PO Box 1616, Lismore, NSW, 2480.

Sourcing the paper briquette maker

Dear Earth Garden,

I was in my physiotherapist's office the other day and came across an *Earth Garden* magazine there, Summer No. 130, Dec-Feb.

On page four, someone asked about a 'Paper Briquette Maker'. I have had one for years — use the bricks in a wood stove. It was not a Kambrook, but a Hot Block Machine, 26 Deloraine Road, Edwardstown, SA, 5039.

Audrey Black, Goomboorian, Qld.

Alternatives to electric or petrol pumps

Dear Earth Garden,

I would like to throw out a challenge! I have no running water on my property, but I have a dam. I would like to use this dam water to water my orchard and vegie garden, so I need a pump and irrigation system. I would very much like to use an alternative to electric or petrol pumps.

So far the recommendations of plumbers, and the like who have come to look and give me a quote (where are

the alternative ideas — haven't we got anywhere in the last 50 years with the mainstream?) have been very environmentally unsound, although they couldn't understand my opinion.

There are a couple of other hiccups — I am nearly sixty, on my own, as well as financially and mechanically challenged. Any of you engineers or inventors got an answer?

PS Looking back over my back copies have found an article on hydraulic rams — couldn't understand much, but is that an answer?

Maureen, 956 Comboyne Road, Cedar Party, NSW 2429.

More 'How to ...' stories

Dear Editors,

In two years time we are making the transition from urban semi-self-sufficient types to, as near as possible, self-sufficiency on some rural land. For my husband, he is returning to his childhood farming area.

Recently I have been researching the price of equipment that may assist with processing our food production. Olive presses for our own olive oil, juice extractors and presses for apples, fruit juice and wine, and a milk separator all add up to huge dollars for pieces of equipment that may only see the light of day a few times a year.

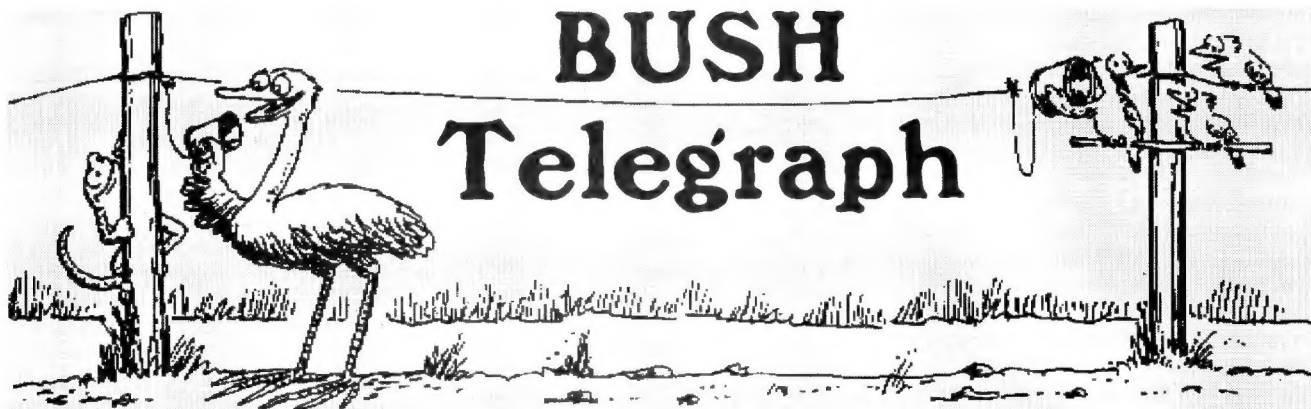
Most of these things are not new technology. If my husband's father and grandfather had been alive, no doubt they would have some great ideas of how to build most of these items. Unfortunately the knowledge, and some of the equipment, has gone from the family.

Sadly, most of our neighbouring properties, despite being subdivided on good farming soil, do not grow their own food requirements. So we are unable to share information and possibly equipment at this stage with them.

I have picked up some terrific build-it-yourself tips over the last couple of years from *Earth Garden*, but I wonder if others would be interested in a regular 'How To' article, with the eventual bonus of the articles being compiled into a 'How To' book that could be sold through the Book Club? I have an extensive library on individual books that specialise in one subject or another, but feel there could be a market for overall 'How To' experience in 2005 for home producers.

Sally, Email: swaggy@bigpond.net.au.

Earth People Write continues on page 68.



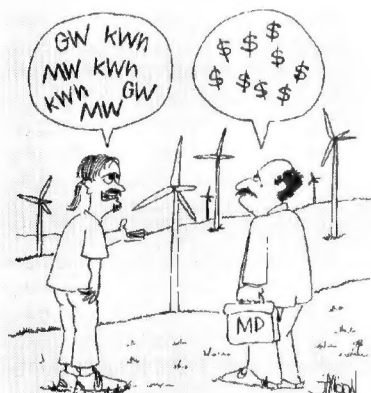
Send any news item that may interest Earth Gardeners to Bush Telegraph. Please submit notice of meetings, festivals and gatherings well in advance of events.

Renewables plan nearly out of wind

Plans for 225 megawatts of wind energy projects valued at \$350 million will be abandoned by Australia's two biggest windfarm developers, Pacific Hydro and Hydro Tasmania, as the mandated renewable energy target (MRET) scheme grinds to a halt. Research by the Business Council for Sustainable Energy, an umbrella lobby group covering renewable and gas-fired power generation, shows the market will only support a further 150 megawatts of renewable generation once current projects are completed.

Under the MRET support scheme, 9500 gigawatts of green power must be produced annually by 2010. But production levels above this would have to compete directly with fossil fuel generation and would not be economic to build. PacHydro's uncommitted but planned capacity includes 165 MW of the final three stages of its Portland projects. Hydro Tasmania has a total of 210 MW on the drawing board at Heemskirk and Musselroe.

The 2010 MRET target will be met in 2005, according to BSCE executive director Ric Brazzale. As a result, there will be "an inevitable downturn in future renewable energy investment in Australia and a possible 'stranding' of industry capability, skills and IP," Mr. Brazzale said.



Environmentally-friendly Broome house wins award

A house in Broome, in northern Western Australia, has won a national award for energy efficiency.

The home in Cable Beach, which features rainwater collection tanks and solar panels, has won the Housing Industry Association's "Greensmart" Award.

Located on Bin Sellek Avenue, the house was built in 2004 after its design won an international competition launched by the state Department of Housing and Works.

The association's Elizabeth Crouch says judges were looking for a range of attributes. "Essentially they were looking for a house that displayed a very simple solution to energy efficiency that was also very cost-effective," she said.

"So the project...in Broome was a project that displayed all of those features and did it in a very practical way so that it could be easily replicated."

It's tough being a hurried woman

Being a mother, holding down a career and doing the housework can be an exhausting combination.

Now experts say increasing numbers of women are so rushed they are suffering from a condition that has been named Hurried Woman Syndrome. The illness is typically caused by chronic stress resulting from the demands of juggling work and family life.

Tiredness, increased appetite, weight gain, trouble sleeping, lack of motivation, and feelings of guilt and low self-esteem are some of the symptoms.

The term Hurried Woman Syndrome was first coined by US researcher Brent Bost, who said it tended to affect women between 25 and 55 who try to do too many things in a short space of time.

Dr. Bost said stress led to an imbalance of the "feelgood" chemical serotonin in the brain, which leads to fatigue and an

increased appetite, setting off the other symptoms.

The only way of curing the syndrome is to reduce your pace of life and organise things better.

The British Osteopathic Association commissioned a survey questioning 2900 16- to 55-year-olds about their health and lifestyle. It found that more than three-quarters of women suffer from at least one chronic health problem, compared with 48 per cent of men.

PMT was the most common chronic ailment, followed by sleeping difficulties (35 per cent), migraines (28 per cent) and irritable bowel syndrome (17 per cent).

Association president Nigel Graham said "It's occurring a lot, particularly with women who have high-pressure jobs and who may have a young family and are trying to do everything at once — running off to the gym at lunch time and then doing the shopping before going home."



Eco-neighbourhood for Bega

A non-profit association known as BEND (Bega Eco-Neighbourhood Developers) have successfully had DA approval from Bega Valley Shire Council to develop a 21-block sub-division on Community Title. Thought to be the first of its type in rural Australia, the 34-acre property includes land allocations like conservation, vegetable and fruit cropping and tree belt systems. Designed using permaculture as the tool, the housing features greywater re-use, composting toilets, grid-interactive solar panels and a community building. For further details and block purchase inquiries see www.bend.org.au.

—JohnChampagne

'Earth, Air, Fire and Water': The Second Mt Toolebewong Festival at Moora Moora

For many years, the Moora Moora Festival has been a popular family day. In 2004, the Mt Toolebewong Landcare Group and the Moora Moora Cooperative jointly made the event possible.

The Festival will follow the well-tryed formula of the Moora Moora Festivals. Its theme this year is Earth, Air, Fire and Water, symbolising humanity's need to be in tune with nature. Talks, displays and demonstrations will cover weeds, feral animals, agroforestry and revegetation. As with the old Moora Moora Festivals, other demonstrations include building with strawbale and earth, alternative health, an art exhibition, crafts, and activities for children. Guided tours showing 27 owner-built houses, solar energy systems and a succession of breathtaking views will be available. Live performers and music will entertain all day, with an outdoor dance at night. Bring warm clothes! Delicious food will be on sale, and there will be a marketplace.

WHEN? Saturday 25 February 2006, from 11 am to late.

WHERE? Go To Healesville via Maroondah Highway. Turn right into Don Road, then follow the signs.

COST? Adults \$10, Concession \$5, Under 16 free, OR \$25 a car load (to encourage car-pooling).

CONTACT Write to Bindi Woodland, Festival Coordinator, LPO Box 214, Healesville 3777; email bobrich@bobswriting.com; phone (03) 5962 4104, (03) 5962 3875; web sites www.mooramoora.org, www.mudsmith.net/moora/

No alcohol or drugs, and leave your dogs and cats at home: the location is a wildlife reserve.

Fat, lazy, stupid and sad: children's TV habits paint a bleak picture

The world's biggest study of the effect on schoolchildren of unchecked exposure to TV and computer games shows it produces individuals who are fatter, lazier and less likely to do well at school than those whose leisure time is policed.

The Criminological Institute of the state of Lower Saxony is looking at the behaviour of 23,000 children aged 10 to 15 as Germany grapples with the growing influence of the internet and television on the young. "The results are truly alarming," said Christian Pfeifer, director. "Over-consumption of either makes them fat, lazy, stupid, ill, sad and unhealthy. TVs and computers literally steal meaningful time for play, sport and fun from their lives. "In addition, brutal films or video games displace things learnt at school or from parents from their memories," Dr Pfeifer said. "Over the last decade the crime rate among the young, particularly boys, has increased dramatically and this is offset by a decline in performance levels in school." He said on average Dortmund children of 10 watched three hours of TV a day and played games for half an hour, while in Munich excess exposure was classified as an hour a day of TV and 30 minutes playing computer games. "The performance of children at school was noticeably worse; their grades went downhill if they spent too much time in front of either," Dr. Pfeifer said.

The study found girls were less prone to addiction than boys as only every third girl in Germany has her own TV or computer as opposed to every second boy.



Revealed: how Howard's \$4m trumped Latham's \$800m, with the loggers cheering

John Howard won the support of timber workers for his vote-winning Tasmanian forests policy just three days before last year's election with an agreement to pay \$4 million to a union-controlled company.

The taxpayer-funded deal was negotiated between the Prime Minister's office and the leader of the forestry union, Michael O'Connor. Officially signed off by Mr Howard after the election, the money will flow to an advisory board dominated by Mr O'Connor's union, the financially-strapped forestry division of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union.

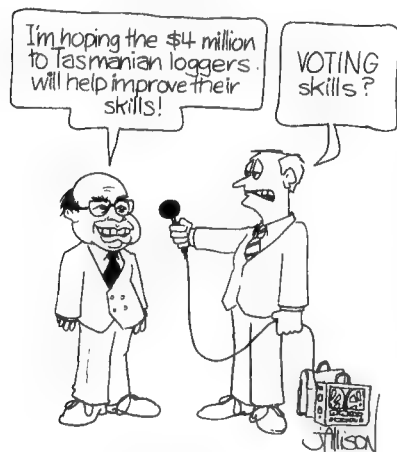
In a turning point in the election, Mr Howard was cheered by several hundred timber workers when he unveiled the package to preserve 170,000 hectares of Tasmanian old-growth forest with no job losses, three days before the October poll.

According to documents obtained by *The Australian*, Mr Howard agreed during pre-election negotiations to commit \$4 million to the Forest and Forest Products Employment Skills Company. The company, known as FAFPESC, is an advisory board for the timber industry, with joint union and employer representatives but traditionally dominated by the CFMEU.

In May Mr Howard said, after reaching formal agreement with the Tasmanian Government, that he wanted to "especially thank" the contribution made to negotiations by Mr O'Connor and his CFMEU colleagues. Government sources recently confirmed that the \$4 million had been committed in the budget and would flow to FAFPESC. Mark Latham's offer of \$800 million compensation to Tasmania to protect Tasmania's old growth forests was trumped by the secret \$4 million deal, Greens' Senator Bob Brown said.

"The rapturous reception by loggers for the Prime Minister in Launceston's Albert Hall made no sense at the time. John Howard was offering \$70 million and Mark Latham \$800 million in their similar forest-saving packages. But the key to the renegade forestry division of the CFMEU's backing of Howard was the secret \$4 million gift to the advisory board dominated by Michael O'Connor, the CFMEU boss, as revealed in *The Australian* newspaper. It was the most expensive standing ovation in history. The Howard deal stinks to high heaven. It is politically corrupting. Why were details of the \$4 million offer not made public then and there? John Howard deceived the Australian voters on their way to the ballot box. The key Howard promise that no loggers' jobs would be lost has been broken. Scores have lost their jobs due to the industrial change and many who cheered the

PM last October are now feeling cheated and are very, very angry." Senator Brown said that he will move for a Senate inquiry into the deal but predicted that the Prime Minister would use his new Senate majority to block the investigation.



Peats Ridge Festival 2005

After the success of the Inaugural Festival in December 2004, Peats Ridge Festival is gearing up towards its second year. Peats Ridge Festival 2005 will present over 60 acts in World Music, Blues, Roots and Dub, Contemporary Music and Chilled Beats on six stages. There's also an Eco Living Stage, Cocktail Bar, Chai Tent, Eco Living Workshops, Market Stalls, Healing Area and an extensive Children's Festival. The Festival runs over three days and features established camping facilities set in the stunning natural surroundings of Glenworth Valley. Located just one hour north of Sydney, this is a corker of a festival for music lovers of all ages!

Located in the gorgeous countryside of Glenworth Valley, on the Popran River, Peats Ridge Festival is surrounded by lush rainforest and forest walks. Like last year there will be swimming in the beautiful river and delicious living. You can even go horse riding!

This year Peats Ridge Festival will include a Sustainable Living Expo offering environmentally-friendly products and services. The Expo will run alongside the Eco Living Stage, which is organised in conjunction with the UNSW's Eco Living Centre. First Release tickets for the Festival went on sale in September and are strictly limited in number. To purchase go to the Festival website www.peatsridgefestival.com.au or Moshtix at www.moshtix.com.au. Ph. 02 9209 4614 The Festival, in conjunction with Sydney Radio Station FBi 94.5FM, is presently running a competition inviting all bands to submit a demo of their music.

Peats Ridge Festival is also putting out a Hoy!! for volunteers wishing to participate

and help make it a fantastic success. Interested? Visit www.peatsridgefestival.com.au and fill out the Volunteer Form. Finally, Peats Ridge Festival offers all festivalgoers from last year the chance to enter their photographs for use in promotion of this year's festival. The winning happy snapper gets a double pass to the entire festival. So if you want to get you and your friends out in the world, visit www.peatsridgefestival.com.au. Not a bad days work for the old Brownie!

What: Peats Ridge Sustainable Arts and Music Festival 2005. **When:** 9-11 Dec 2005. **Where:** Glenworth Valley, 69 Cooks Road, Peats Ridge. **How Much:** First Round tickets \$75+bf. Avail. from 5 September 2005. **Tickets:** Moshtix: www.moshtix.com.au Ph: 02 9209 4614 or www.peatsridgefestival.com.au More Information: www.peatsridgefestival.com.au Ph: 02 9281 3740 Line Up: To be announced Monday 19 September on FBi 94.5FM and website.

Gunns ordered to pay environmentalists' court costs

The Supreme Court of Victoria has ordered Tasmanian timber company Gunns Limited to pay a substantial part of the legal costs of 20 environmentalists. Gunns accused the defendants of trespass, sabotage and the destruction of property at its logging sites. The court's order relates to the cost of preparing a statement of claim that it struck out last August. A new statement of claim is now being prepared. Outside the court, Greens leader Bob Brown, who is one of the defendants, said he found it extraordinary that Gunns' lawyers are again arguing for more time. "I thought they had their case ready on 14 December last year; now they're saying it's oppressive for them not to get a couple more weeks," Senator Brown said. Senator Brown says the legal bills are already huge and the new claim has not even begun to be heard. "We think that Gunns should desist. It should remove this case against people who are defending the wild forests and wildlife of Tasmania defending this nation's heritage," he said.

Strawbale fire test report

Busy strawbale builders and advocates, Frank Thomas and Ingrid Leusch, have had translated into English a recent German report on fire tests for strawbale construction. Initiated by the German Strawbale Building Association (FASBA), the tests confirm a fire rating of F90 and meet German construction regulations, which are tough compared to some other countries.

Frank and Ingrid hope that their certified translation of the fire tests will help strawbale construction meet council

approval, especially since fire safety regulations have been made tougher in some states. The tests are expensive and it would help the international strawbale construction community if they were not duplicated in different countries. For a fee of \$185 Frank and Ingrid will provide a copy of the original German report plus a copy of the certified English translation. The money will help pay for the couple's expenses (the certified translation, copies of the document, postage and handling) and a donation to FASBA.

Frank and Ingrid's website has recently changed to www.strawtec.com.au. Finally, a fascinating German strawbale book has been translated into English. The English title is *Building with Straw: Design and Technology of a Sustainable Architecture*, 2005, published by Birkhauser-Publishers of Architecture, Switzerland. You can contact Frank & Ingrid, at Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow, Strawbale Construction, on (phone and fax): (02) 4443 5282, mobile: 0408415806, email: strawbales@bigpond.com.

UN recognition for EcoV

UNESCO, the UN's Paris-based education, scientific and cultural organisation has granted EcoV - The Global Organics & Sustainability Show - permission to use its logo for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) to promote the expo. EcoV will be held at the Bendigo Exhibition Centre in May next year. The director of the show, Brian Abbott, says the UN honour is in recognition of the role of the expo in educating people to make more sustainable earth-friendly decisions in their everyday lives. EcoV - the Global Organics & Sustainability Show becomes part of a network of events and programs throughout the world promoting sustainable development. As well, it joins a small number of Australian groups and communities that have been given the right to use the UN DESD logo to promote their ventures.

EcoV is a multi-layered celebration of environmental sustainability. It aims to support and further the vast amount of environmental awareness already in the community. EcoV will be an opportunity to take people a few further steps along the path towards sustainability. The expo will be the largest eco-living show ever in Victoria with the most comprehensive display of organic and bio-dynamic products and the biggest exhibition of environmentally-friendly products and services. The expo will be arranged around the themes of Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Workplaces, Sustainable Communities.

For further details contact Brian Abbott, Director, EcoV on 0404 06 1404 or (03) 9889 5631.

Earth Garden's New Office

— Part Two —

In Part Two, *Earth Garden* editor, Alan T Gray, explains how the magazine's new strawbale, grid-connected solar office changed from building site (see the cover of EG 133) to state-of-the-art Green office in six weeks. Was this fast enough, though, for Alan to win the \$50 bet?

by Alan T Gray
Trentham, Victoria.

WAITING, waiting, waiting. Whose idea was it, anyway, to try to build this new strawbale office and get the walls rendered in winter? Who fooled himself into thinking he could get the carpenters to finish on time so the walls could be rendered before the autumn break heralded six months of cold, wet weather? 'Fool' may be the operative word in that last sentence.

In Trentham, the winters are long and wet, and even when it's not raining the air is moist till about October — it can even hail and snow at Christmas around here in the central Highlands 100 km north-west of Melbourne.

So from mid-August, all we could do was wait, as the rendering process began to take much longer than any of us anticipated. In desperation, Andy Baker from Country Spray Render — our overworked and understaffed rendering maestro — tries hiring an industrial gas heater to dry out the walls so we can finish off the building. It's so wet in Trentham that even this fails.

Finally, by late-August (where we left you, dear readers, in part one in our winter issue), we're starting to see progress again: the honey-coloured lime render starts to dry and Andy and his team can rush in and apply the second and third coats.

We gamble a little and call back the carpenters before the rendering's finished, to put in the ceiling beams and hang the ceiling panels: great big long sheets of Solomit strawboard. The Solomit straw panels have been made in Australia by the same company since the 1930s and they look superb in place. The new ceiling has excellent acoustic qualities: the exposed straw ceiling 'fibres' absorb sound beautifully and we know we won't have to put up with the whirr and buzz of modern office equipment once the office is finished.

These Solomit panels are a little tricky to install but we track down a bloke who's been hanging them for 20 years, and once he's shown our (new!) carpenters how to do it, they fly along. The width of the straw ceiling panels can be adjusted so that the panels sit flush against the walls and there's no need for all that wasted cornice to hide any rough joins.

Ceiling insulation

The straw ceiling panels are rated at nearly R1.0 so we also get a very well-insulated ceiling as a bonus. As the ceiling panels go up we rush behind the chippies, stuffing in insulation batts made from recycled PET bottles: this may be the best use yet for Coke bottles — certainly better than drinking the stuff and supporting the Coca Cola corporation!

Combined with the foil-backed insulation under the Colorbond roofing iron, we have a total ceiling insulation of R6: nearly double the recommended rating for our area but exactly our target rating. It doesn't seem sensible to me to go to the trouble and expense of creating R8 strawbale walls, only to be let down by average or lousy ceiling insulation. If your walls are rated to R8 but your ceiling is only R3.5, in my opinion, you haven't built an energy-efficient home — you've built an expensive chimney.

Fit out

When we sat around planning our new office one of the things we looked forward to was not having a spaghetti of loose wires tangled behind most desks: as computer networks grow they seem to breed cabling exponentially. Karen, Doug and Linda spent some very productive times feeding computer cables into the internal walls so now we have neat little connector boxes next to every desk, each one capable of taking a phone, internet connection or fax cable — heaven.

Natural lime painted walls

One cold August day we decided it was time to get our EG natural paint guru, Doug Falconer, to mix up some 'tumeric' coloured lime paint so we could paint the internal walls. We didn't want to use chemical, solvent-based paint for our new office. This was a great chance to put into action some of the natural paint recipes Doug has written about in recent years in *Earth Garden*. Karen and I listened intently as Doug pulled out bottles of milk, lime, and oxide and proceeded to make a very simple, natural lime paint: it was thicker than a lime wash and went on so easily it was almost like finger painting. In about 20 minutes the three of us



Even before we've started landscaping our office garden it's become a very pleasant work space.

painted a three metre high wall that's about six metres long.

Next, we found some dirt cheap tiles at a local tile shop and lined up a tiler to do the bathroom and kitchen. We were disappointed to find that the 'Recycled Carpet Company', which we'd hoped to use, was untraceable, but the local carpet shop was friendly, helpful and cost-conscious.

We were now getting to the finishing off stage but still had wet render on our strawbale walls. So while we waited, waited, waited, we lined up our power and phone cabling from the street. One snowy August day, our backhoe driver dug a 100 metre trench from the street, and we had the phone and power cables buried, the trench backfilled, and gravel laid all within 24 hours. It NEARLY went according to plan but when digging the sewerage connection the following week we hit the phone cable and Telstra charged us \$300 to repair it! Aah well — you live and learn.

Powercor, the local electricity company, came and installed two electricity meters in our meter box: one to measure how much solar power we generate and sell to Powercor, and the other to measure how much mains power we consume when we're not generating enough solar power. Our electrician finished installing power points and lights, and finally by mid-September Andy was getting a chance to finish the second and third coats of render. The only good thing about the first coat taking so long to dry was that Andy had applied this coat very thickly, and it meant that it was easy for the subsequent coats to 'go off'. About time!

No forests died

Something we forgot about — because it seemed so



The two electricity meters ready to go to work: one measures how much mains power we consume, and the other measures how much excess solar power we 'pump' back into the mains grid to reduce our power bills.



The truth window: yes, it really is a strawbale office.

automatic — is that we haven't used a single stick of forest timber in our building. All our timber (and there's a lot more in a steel framed strawbale building than you'd ever imagine!) is either plantation pine or recycled. These days that's very common for owner builders but it's still worth mentioning for people who continue to get hoodwinked by their builders, many of whom still like to use rainforest timber, native forest timbers, and other imported forest products like Canadian Western Red Cedar or oregon. Just because your chippy's used these forest timbers for the past 20 years doesn't mean he can't substitute ANY of them with a forest-friendly timber.

Rainwater

In the meantime Karen and Doug have wrangled our 22,000 litre water tank into place. Bluescope Steel have created a really clever water system for any householder, city or country. If you're in the city, Bluescope will visit your home, assess the correct sized tank for your needs and budget, then match it perfectly with the right sized pump and a clever two-way controller. The beauty of the controller is that it will ensure that your whole house can run from the rainwater collected in your tank — until the tank runs dry. Then the controller will automatically switch you onto town water and draw water from the street mains. When your tank fills up again the controller will switch you back to tank water. This way you always minimise your mains water use, and maximise your use of rainwater without ever having to check a single water level.

The only problem now, dear readers, is that the calendar had ticked over to the start of spring: in a very solemn ceremony I slowly handed over \$50 to my gloating Advertising Manager and friend, Doug Falconer. Yes, sad to say,

Doug won the bet. I decided that maybe it was all just a salutary lesson to the Green, *Earth Garden*-reading youth of Australia: don't gamble and don't bet — especially with Doug Falconer.

As soon as the third coat of render had dried, Karen moved heaven and earth to finish the office and move in: she was sick of the old office and keen to enjoy the benefits of a calming, eco-friendly office atmosphere after 13 years in our old office. She even secretly (and very kindly) French-polished my desk for me: it was my grandfather's, and looks superb in my new office.

We move in

The carpet was laid, our brilliant painter, Paul Reeves, whipped through and did a wonderful job, Karen organised for the desks, computers, books, and filing cabinets to be moved in, and on Monday 26 September (a mere 26 days late) we moved into our new Green office.

As I write this in mid-November we still have some teething problems: it took us WEEKS to get a plumber to help us hook up the water supply or down pipes. Two days after we moved in, a night of heavy rain left the warehouse and half the office section flooded. It took Harry and I about six hours work to mop up the water, lift the carpet, and cut out the wet sections of underlay to dry. A week later all was well and we're slowly inching towards one of the Greenest private offices in Australia. Soon we'll ask our architect, Marcus Ward, to run the office through the energy rating software used by the State Government; and then we'll all have a good laugh at how badly the strawbale building is rated (see our cover story in the March-May 2005 issue of *Earth Garden* for more).

And in a week or so we hope to have our solar electric panels hooked up to our electricity meter: then we'll be able to start tracking our power use and see just how energy efficient we can make this office. We'd like to totally minimise our Greenhouse gas emissions and we think we can do very well if we plan carefully. Ernest Gavey from Solazone installed our ten X 150 watt BP Solar Energizer kit: in the next issue of *Earth Garden* we'll present a detailed description of this off-the-shelf, grid-connected system. We went for the 1500 watt kit, but BP Solar also supply these systems in a 500 or 1000 watt kit.

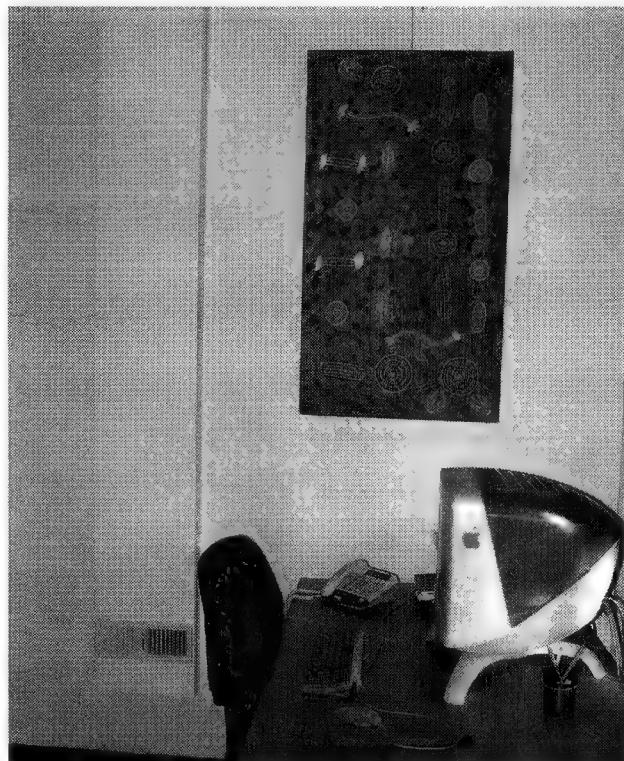
Pleasant surprise

Perhaps the most pleasant surprise so far since we've moved into the building has been the performance of our new solar heater, the Australian-invented Sun Lizard. We plan to write more about the Sun Lizard over the next year as we track its performance with data loggers supplied by its inventor, Colin Gillam. Colin is a rare beast: a modest but highly motivated inventor committed to a Green future for Australia. If the performance of his Sun Lizard so far is anything to go by, Colin has much to contribute in helping to reduce Australia's Greenhouse gas emissions. Even on cloudy days, the metal grate attached to an internal wall, which delivers the warmed air from the Sun Lizard via

ducting in the ceiling, is pumping out warm air, and reducing our heating requirements. We hope to reduce our heating by more than 65 per cent compared with our old office. It should be easy to make the comparison: we have all our electricity bills from the old office, and we're using exactly the same equipment in our new office to produce the magazine, so any reduction in our heating bills next winter will have to come from the eco-friendly technology we've built into the new office: the Sun Lizard, the strawbale walls and heavily insulated ceiling, the passive solar design, the thermal mass of the internal walls and floors, and the photovoltaic solar panels that will cut our mains power use.

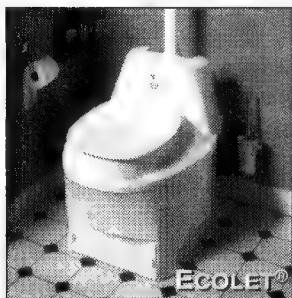
We are on the cusp of a very exciting live office experiment in Greenhouse gas emission reductions, and we look forward to bringing you the results over the next year or so.

Apart from the satisfaction of reducing our impact on the Earth, however, we've already found that the office is an incredibly relaxing and pleasant space to work in: it's quiet and calm and comfortable, and we don't have the extremes of heat and cold in different corners of the office that we were used to in our old office. I'm writing this at my grandfather's desk, which I've used for nearly 20 years in editing *Earth Garden*. In such a pleasant work space it feels like — readers willing — I'll still be here in my comfortable, eco-friendly office at this desk in another 20 years.



The Sun Lizard 'grate' which delivers the solar-heated air into our office.

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Melbourne's western suburbs are not generally known for public organic gardens and sculpture parks. But a dedicated team of workers and volunteers have established an inspiring precedent.

by Amadis Lacheta

Braybrook, Victoria.

WHERE do we go to meet and greet outside of work and home life? Often a café, shops, movies, parks, the beach if we're lucky and ... beautiful community gardens. Community gardens are fantastic 'third places': all are welcome, they are places of beauty and sanctuary, they may produce food and are perfect for demonstrating sustainable living. They are a wonderful opportunity for communities to reconnect with each other and the earth, especially where many live in less desirable circumstances than they would wish.

The Braybrook Community Garden is such a place. It is in the western suburbs of Melbourne, next to the Braybrook Community Centre and Reichstein children's playground — a hub for the diverse local community. How did it all get started?

Community meetings in early 1996 voiced concerns about declining public housing stock, neglected public spaces and parkland, and poor community facilities. A community garden was proposed, and in 2002 council compiled a list of possible sites including Braybrook Park.

Council planner Gill Savage, other staff and commu-

nity members met to consider the possibility of developing a community garden with artworks in Braybrook Park. A grant submission brought Council \$80,000, and state government and council funding was added. Braybrook has high unemployment and a high incidence of mental health issues. In recent years, refugees from the Sudan and Somalia have increased the naturally diverse population including Macedonian, Vietnamese and long-term Australian residents. The Garden of Eden became involved when Ailsa Winfield from the Maribyrnong City Council strolled up one day to the Albert Park Railway Station and asked us if we would like to co-create the garden — naturally we couldn't say no!

A number of creative people came together to build a unique garden to showcase art, alternative building design and to demonstrate sustainable living principles such as organic growing, onsite rainwater harvesting and environmentally friendly and recycled building materials.

Braybrook is an unusual community garden for a number of reasons. It exists in a neighbourhood that has ample garden space in backyards, front yards and nature strips. It has no individual garden allotments; community gardens are often created for people with little or no access to land for cultivation. The garden is also unique because



Above: Pete finishing the strawbale shelter with natural ochre paint.

Left: students and staff from Christ the King Primary School rendering the strawbale structure.

straight lines rarely feature in the design — instead, curves and free-form shapes abound.

The community gets involved

Creation of the garden involved many different people — local dedicated volunteers; staff from Maribyrnong City Council led by Gill Savage; Pete McCurley, Neil Dillon and Maurie Wellington from the Western Region Tool Library (housed at the Braybrook Community Centre); community artist James Cattell; local schools and a number of Work for the Dole (WFTD) participants. Braybrook Primary School students decorated tiles, and year five and six students from Christ the King Primary School helped to render the walls of the strawbale shelter and made terracotta tiles. Year two and three students from Christ the King visited the garden and made a healthy salad, and the Caroline Chisolm Secondary College undertook a research project visiting the garden, baking in the oven and bringing along nursing home residents. Ailsa Winfield arranged events and promotion, and Garden of Eden Project Officer Amadis Lacheta and WFTD supervisor Tony Cudmore coordinated the internal garden design and work on the ground. Work began in August 2004 and was completed in February 2005.

The design of the garden began with Maribyrnong City Council landscape architect Adrian Gray and local residents who combined two visual themes: the organic and the industrial. The curved form of the garden refers to seeds and fruit, and Braybrook's industrial heritage is represented by the diagonals of the saw-toothed factory roofs visible from the site. This unusual shape, coupled with Pete's strawbale shelter, provided the inspiration to step outside the square.

The garden includes raised keyhole vegetable growing beds, a fruit, nut and citrus orchard, a bush foods bed, an aromatic and culinary herb bed, the strawbale shelter

rendered in local clays and natural ochre paints, a cob oven, a tool shed, compost bays and a materials drop-off area. Two water tanks — a 1000-litre galvanised tank and a 1200-litre waterwall tank housed in the strawbale structure — provide gravity-fed water for the garden.

James and Ailsa worked with local schools and volunteers on the garden entrance sculpture, the waving farmer sculpture and tile borders and murals for the orchard beds and cob oven. Neil and Maurie guided volunteers and WFTD participants in constructing sculptures, garden furniture, tool shed shelving and the cob oven door. Community members from many cultural backgrounds in the strawbale workshops assisted with slapping render on the straw walls. Even the principal of Christ the King Primary School came in his pristine white overalls (not pristine for long!). Son from Vietnam commented that he didn't think they built structures like this in Australia, and how much it reminded him of home!

Stocking the garden

Plant material came from the Garden of Eden and Ceres (Centre for Research into Environmental Strategies) nurseries. Locals brought in plants from their gardens, both edibles and ornamentals. After two and a half months, our gardeners were harvesting armfuls of produce. The cob oven produced delicious pizzas to accompany salads and vegetables for the Braybrook big day out, the Christmas party and the end-of-garden-construction celebration.

The garden was promoted in newspaper articles, monthly newsletters and community workshops. At these workshops, all involved could express their wishes for the garden, discuss management issues, and get together for creative workshops.

Deciding on how a community garden is managed is never an easy process. During construction, all those participating were invited to vote at the 'garden election'.



Neil and Tony with an abundant harvest.

Were they in favour of individual or shared garden beds? Due to limited space, the community decided on communal raised beds for vegetable growing rather than individual plots. How well this will work is yet to be seen. As more people frequent the garden they will want to make decisions about what is planted where, and who tends to which part of the garden.

Another issue is how the garden will be available to the local community. Ideally the garden would be open at all times, but this raises concerns from long-standing garden volunteers about planting, tending and harvesting in the garden and respect for what has already been created. For now, the garden can be visited by appointment, or every Friday afternoon from 1pm to 4pm, or when volunteers are watering in the evenings.

The Braybrook Community Art and Garden Project was created with a lot of financial support, and other support from Maribyrnong City Council. Not every garden is fortunate enough to have this. What follows is a quick guide to setting up a community garden. For more compre-

hensive advice, please refer to the excellent guide produced by Cultivating Community: *The Good Practice Guide for Community Gardens*. This is available at www.cultivating-community.org.au.

Recipe for setting up a community garden

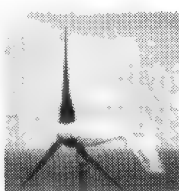
Ingredients

1. A good handful of enthusiastic and committed people.
2. The right site, where people will be welcome, where materials can be dropped off, and with public transport access.
3. Who owns the land? Talk to your local council to negotiate about allocating land. The process may need to be included in the council's plans and land-use strategies. What do the neighbours think? It is essential that the chosen site has the support of as many people as possible.
4. At least one and preferably more sympathetic council officers to support with funding, grants, processes and planning.
5. Who is responsible for the garden and how will it be managed? Will you need to incorporate your group? This gives you legal advantages in return for accepting legal responsibilities, and offers some protection for office holders from debts and liabilities incurred by the group.
6. Money! From local council, grants and fundraising by keen gardeners.
7. A good dash of materials and support from the local community — not to be underestimated. You certainly don't need to pay for everything, that's what gleaning is all about.
8. A garden design that comes from the community, and someone to facilitate this process. It's not just about veggie growing — people need places to rest, play and commune. Are all ages and abilities catered for? Have you visited other gardens for advice and inspiration?
9. People to create the garden. This can include professional landscape contractors who can certainly help, but make use of the skills and experience in the community itself.
10. Regular meetings to iron out difficulties and an open process for discussion and decision making. The right person(s) to chair meetings so that things don't get lost in the wash, or worse, just don't get done at all.

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11. How will the garden be managed in the long term? This includes who gets what plot, responsibilities, forfeiture of garden plots, fundraising for further development and materials, who gets involved and how. Most community gardens operate on a membership scheme.

12. Promotion — who knows about your community garden? How can more people get involved?

13. Health and safety — make sure the garden is safe and that you have a first aid kit on hand. Where is your nearest medical clinic or hospital?

14. Insurance — what happens if things go wrong? Public liability insurance and work cover insurance for employees are essential, and a policy that covers you for theft and vandalism is also worth considering.

15. Celebration! Get together often to celebrate what has been achieved, and enjoy the fruits of your labours. Even small things can be vitally important in the evolution of a community garden, and can offset disappointments and inevitable delays.

Assemble all ingredients with care, making sure that none are accidentally omitted. With equal amounts of sunshine and rain, patience and enthusiasm, your community garden growth is assured. Enjoy!

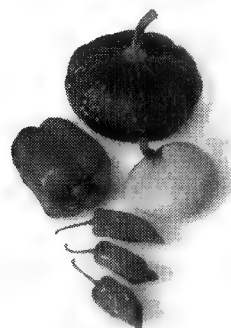
The Garden of Eden Incorporated is a non-profit organization established to educate the community in the principles of sustainability, permaculture and natural health. The community garden site at the old Albert Park Railway Station in South Melbourne was developed in 2000, and in 2002, Dr Michael Dahan established the Garden of Eden Foundation to fund projects. The Garden of Eden Incorporated works in conjunction with Cultivating Community to create community gardens in metropolitan Melbourne on housing estates and public land. These projects are often created in conjunction with Work for the Dole teams and volunteers.

• For more information on the Garden of Eden, visit our website, www.gardenofedenproject.net.au, or call (03) 9696 8013. For more information about the Braybrook Community Garden, contact Ailsa Winfield on (03) 9344 6600 or Gill Savage on (03) 9688 0385.



The community-created garden sculpture, farmer Zebediah.

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The Joy of Geese



Geese are grazing animals — vegans — just like cows, so they don't eat bugs and worms. They do love grain and fruit and they're also fantastic high jumpers when the orchard is fruiting.

To disable both defence systems of a goose at once, loosely grab the neck just below the head (loose, not a stranglehold) then quickly gather up the body with the other arm making sure to keep the wings pinned down. A fast confident action is needed. This is just one of the many handy tips, gleaned from Jill's experience, in this detailed study of life with geese.

by Jill Redwood
Goongerah, Victoria.

I'M OFTEN asked by visitors, as they cautiously walk past my mob of honking, haughty geese, "What sort of ducks are they?" Others ask why I keep geese. For eggs? No, they only lay one clutch a year. Depending on the breed and if you keep swiping their eggs you'll get between ten and 50 in a year. For meat then? Never! Could you kill Mother Goose? How about watchdogs? The geese that gave rise to the reputation of being aggressive security devices weren't the forebears of my lot (though there must be some breeds that keep this reputation going).

Goodlooking Lawn Mowers

So why keep geese? Primarily for aesthetics. A mob of snow white or soft grey birds with their elegant curves and orange feet and beaks make a beautiful pattern out on the verdant pastures. And when they're on the water, a

flotilla of geese look pretty stunning too. But besides their artistic merits, they have a few practical uses.

Geese make damned good lawn mowers. Four geese eat as much grass as a sheep, but don't bung them in a yard of hip-high or dry dead grass, and expect it to be manicured lawn in a week. Their beaks are designed to crop short grass so their paddock or feeding grounds must have fairly short and lush grass to begin with. Unlike sheep, they are hardy, don't need drenching, don't destroy river banks, are soft footed, don't become fly blown and have knowing eyes.

Food

Geese are grazing animals — vegans — just like cows, so they don't eat bugs and worms. They do love grain and fruit and will strip the seed heads off long grass or a crop of oats. They're also fantastic high jumpers when the orchard is fruiting. They'll leap up, grab a hanging branch tip and tug-tug-tug, until fruit plops onto the ground. Geese only seem to need supplementary feeding if the grass is light

on. I give mine a small can of corn each night before tucking them into their pen. To help them grind the grass in their gut they shovel up sand or dirt. If you don't have any you might have to provide them with grit or sand.

Noise

Geese can be extremely noisy in large flocks, to the point where you almost need to don earmuffs to feed them. I find this is their one drawback. They sure don't have a melodious call. It's more like a pack of footy hooligans trying to yodel.

Company

Geese need other geese for company and are extremely devoted friends. Years ago I had a lone goose that had lost its mate. It quickly established a one-sided relationship with an old draft horse, to the point where the goose would run up the road after us if we went for a ride and be found waiting there on our return! Another lonely goose became very fond of a neighbour and every time he'd visit, the goose would run to greet him, gagging and chattering to him like a lost mate. (I have a photo of the goose trying to mount his leg!)

Mating

Geese are much more civil than chooks in their mating habits. Unlike roosters the mating is a gentle affair after mutual consent. A pair will faithfully bond for life. They begin breeding when two years old and are normally monogamous — all being equal, but a gander can mate with four or five geese if you have more females. But if you have more ganders than geese there'll be serious boy-brawls for months in winter and spring.

Water

Geese are water birds by nature — of course. They mate on water, they like to shovel up sand from the river bed, their eggs need to be humidified by a mother's wet belly regularly, and their wet feet act as air-conditioning units to cool themselves in the heat, so large amounts of fresh water are absolutely essential if you're thinking of geese. Some keep-

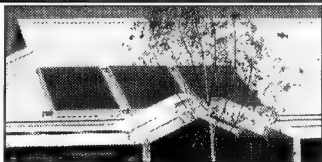


A newly hatched gosling is as cute as a button but don't be tempted to pick one up, or you'll experience the protective fury of the parents.

ers will say they only need enough to wet their heads but then battery chooks are supposed to only need ten square inches of cage space too. Normally, wild geese would migrate to cooler climates (who wouldn't, having to wear such a thick doona all year round?) but our domestic friends are bred to waddle not fly, so have to handle the heat best they can. If you don't have a creek or dam, site their water ponds where you can make use of the moist ground and liquid manure.

Herding

Geese are the easiest animals to move around. If you have a big mob they can split into two groups, keeping you running back and forward like a Kelpie. But small mobs easily move in front of you without fuss. Walk calmly behind with arms slightly out, or a stick calmly waving them on and you can have the mob doing figure eights in the paddock. Getting them through unfamiliar gateways can be a problem, but quiet persistence and allowing them space and time to think about it usually sees them through. In times gone by, a village boy was often given the job of shepherding the geese out to pasture each day.



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The elegant curves and orange feet and beaks of geese make beautiful patterns on the verdant pastures.

Poo

These animals are prodigious pooers. But unlike duck and chook poo it's not offensive. Goose poo is just processed grass and very loose. It disintegrates quickly either in the rain or sun. The goose pen will provide copious amounts of luvly slushy manure for adding to the compost heap. I have the goose pen built onto the garden end to make shifting the stuff easy. In summer when it dries out it makes a fine top dressing for garden vegies (on garden beds, not on a salad!). I have even experimented by adding one small 'extrusion of goose' into the pulp water when making handmade paper. It gives the paper a lovely natural even fleck — though most people prefer to pick their own grass and blend it for the same effect.

One last word on goose poo: many farmers claim cows and geese don't mix as their copious deposits foul the pasture and the fussy cows refuse to eat the grass. I've never experienced this with any of my stock of horses or goats. It could be that the life span of a goose's calling card is too short to be a problem here.

Types

Geese come in a variety of types and sizes. Toulouse, Embden and Chinese are the commonly kept breeds. For years I've only kept the Pilgrim or Scottish geese. These are obviously the passive NVA types (meaning *non-violent action* for those outside of activism). The males are white and the females are grey, which makes sexing them a cinch.

The Toulouse is the giant of geese. They are grey and white and weigh in at about ten to 12 kilograms. Embden are white beauties and are slightly smaller. The Chinese are very attractive exotic-looking birds with slender necks and a knob on the head where the beaks join on. They're often an unusual brown colour.

Lodgings

You can keep ten birds an acre for poorer pasture and 20 for good grass you could keep a cow on. Foxes will always be a problem so pen the geese at night. Whether you have city or country foxes will determine how sturdily you construct their fox-shelter. I have a theory that country foxes are extremely wary of all things wire and metal. City foxes live with these things and have no respect for humans and their metal contraptions. My geese do fine in a flimsy wire netting pen that's about 1.2 metres (four feet) high. I put a tap and large water tub in the pen to ensure they have water for the hours they are locked in. They have tree shelter but no covered shed and seem happy enough outside in the elements. If you want to fatten them though, the less energy they have to use keeping warm, the more roly-poly they'll be later. A three-sided shed with dry bedding would be luxury but make it easy to clean out. During bad weather when all other farm animals seek shelter, the geese are out there whooping it up and paying homage to Huey.

Nesting

In mid-winter, the fellas start arguing and becoming quite protective of their mates. By late winter, geese start touring their territories. Like newlyweds out roaming display homes, they check out all likely nest sites that might suit. If you know what a goose's needs are, you can provide them with ready-made maternity wards to ensure they don't go off nesting in the reeds down the creek and end up on Reynard's menu. Large tea chests or 44-gallon drums on their sides lined with a thick layer of dry straw or hay are good. A car tyre with plenty of dry straw or grass makes a good dish to nest in but they'll need it to be in a secluded spot. Anywhere that can be fox-proofed at night is a good idea. They are extremely vulnerable and unable to defend themselves for the 30 days it takes to hatch the goslings. This is the time when the ganders will fire up if there's any threat to Mrs Goose.

She will lay an egg every second day until there are eight to 16-ish. Then she'll start sitting. She should scrape or have a small depression in the dirt which she'll cover with nesting material. When she gets off her eggs for her daily ablutions and a quick feed, she'll also cover them over and keep them hidden and warm until she returns.

Babies

A newly hatched gosling is as cute as a button but don't be tempted to pick one up, or you'll experience the protective fury of the parents. As with chooks, the goose mother is best left alone while the little ones are hatching. If she's disturbed and has to get up and stomp about over the eggs in agitation or defensiveness, squashed babies are a certainty. The goslings can survive for a day or two under Mum without being taken out to feed. They have enough yolk in the bellies to tide them over. They'll start pulling away at blades of grass imitating Mum and Dad almost immediately. Make sure there's some shallow water for them to drink or paddle in. You can try giving them wheat or

chicken crumble but I've found the parents gobble this up before the young'ns get a chance to investigate.

Warning

Goslings get waterlogged! Strange as it may seem, baby goslings are not waterproof. A good fall of rain or a waddle through wet grass can be the end of them. When they get soggy, they can't keep up, fall by the wayside and can die of cold.

Early one spring morning after rain, I was out tending the critters and discovered half the goslings were missing. I hunted through the long wet grass, gathering up one soaking, comatose, yellow bundle after another. I raced in and threw the icy bundles under the bed covers of a sleeping visitor. I did this three or four times. In an hour or so, most were slowly coming back to life and ready to join the crew again. And the visitor was well and truly awake. If you lack a friend that's sleeping in, try a hot water bottle in the bottom of an esky with a towel or dry straw on top. If they get too cold, they can appear dead to the point where they are stretched out and stiff, but gentle heat can revive them. (This trick also works with chickens and ducklings). Mum will often shelter the goslings until the rain stops but then walk them through long wet grass. So keep a close eye on them or keep them away from long wet grass. Once they are about a month old they should be OK.

The other danger awaiting young goslings is of course foxes. I've had no experience with the other breeds but my NVA geese don't put up much fight out in the paddock, preferring to just run, which means the fox just picks off the slowest each time. Back in their secure pen or nest drum it's a different matter though.

Catching geese

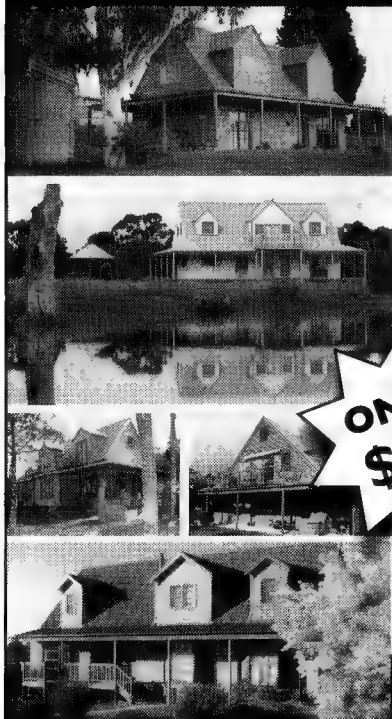
Besides their mean bite, they also pack a punch. Yes, geese can punch really hard with their wings. To disable both defence systems at once I loosely grab the neck just below the head (loose, not a strangle-hold) then quickly gather up the body with the other arm making sure to keep the wings pinned down. A fast confident action is needed and can take some practice. Dither for a second and they get the upper hand. Don't ever drop a goose from a height; they crash land heavily and could break their breastbone. Lower them down and let them go.

Meat

If you want to know how to kill and dress a goose, you'll have to read another book on the subject. I've only ever eaten a goose that accidentally met its end by sticking its nose into a dog dish that the owner was busily engaged emptying.

I didn't try the sleeping visitor trick that time. And I still maintain — geese make a better paddock picture than a paté platter.

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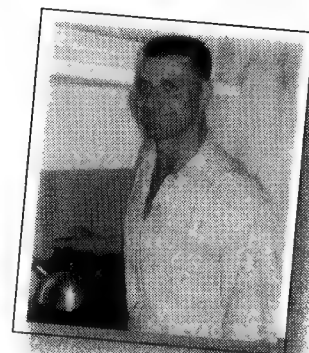
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From Spade To Blade

Garden Recipes by Gary Thomas

The gardening chef has some tricks up his sleeve for Christmas dinner.



LUNCH on Christmas day can be a bit tricky for the globally aware eco-student. We fall into the category of people who want our kids to spend the day running around the paddocks with their cousins from the city and chatting with various aunts, uncles and extended family members. The more of us there are, the better I like it.

This inevitably leads to compromises of course. For example, we collect interesting pieces of newspaper for giftwrapping and one time I requested that family members do the same rather than buy a dedicated printed product. Some people said they couldn't agree to this. When I asked why they told me that the gift paper they used came from the post-Christmas sales and only cost half price! What can I say? Sometimes the mental gulf is too great!

Still, we had thirty odd here for lunch last year and not one brought along any junk or rubbishy snacks, which was a lovely gift for my soul. In anticipation, I got up before the sun hit the veggie patch and picked lots of peas and broad beans for various people to shell. It's a job that attracts those who need it most.

For my own part, on the day I don't want to do anything except put some things into the oven, and then, after a while, pull them out again. That's why I prepare these recipes the day before.

Whole baked fish with lemon, couscous and coriander

A two kilogram trout or salmon will feed about ten people.

- 1 whole fish
- 3 cups cold cooked couscous
- grated rind and juice of two lemons

- half a cup of washed, dried and chopped coriander leaves
- 2 teaspoons fish sauce (optional)
- salt and pepper
- extra lemons
- olive oil for brushing.

1. Prepare the fish by removing the backbone. If you buy it through a shop, ask them to butterfly the fish for you. You will then only need to pick out the second layer of bones from the fillet, which you can find by rubbing your fingers gently along the exposed flesh. A pair of tweezers is most effective for removal.

2. If doing it yourself for the first time, make sure you have a thin sharp knife with a flexible blade. Clean fish thoroughly. Slice down through the tail to expose the backbone. Break through the backbone where it connects with the head. Place fish on a flat surface on its side. Starting with the rib cage, gently work the knife behind the ribs and detach the fish from the bone, working out towards the edge. Really fresh fish will come away without even using the knife most of the time. When all flesh has been separated from the bone, hold the bone at the neck end with one hand, hold

the fish down with the other and pull bone free. It might seem like a bit of an extra effort at the moment but it really is worth removing those secondary bones with tweezers now.

3. Combine couscous, the rind, lemon juice, coriander leaves and fish sauce if using. Season to taste. Pack the stomach cavity of the fish with the filling. Do not overfill as it will expand a little during cooking.

4. Lightly pat excess moisture from the fish and brush the skin with oil.

5. Take a piece of foil twice the size of the fish and brush it thoroughly with the oil to prevent sticking. Lay a line of



thinly sliced lemon rounds on the foil and lay the fish on top. Garnish with another line of lemon rounds. Crimp and seal the edges of the foil to keep all the moisture in the package.

6. Place on a preheated barbecue plate for about seven minutes each side, depending on the fish of course. Remove from heat and gently take off foil to maintain shape. Serve hot or cold.

Tofu turkey

Bean curd skin wrapping baked in the oven gives a crispy textured finish. 'Product of Malaysia' skins are light and thin and better for this dish.

- 1 block firm tofu
- 100 ml lime juice
- 100 ml light soy sauce
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp salt
- couscous filling listed above
- 1 packet Malaysian bean curd skin

- 1.** Slice through the tofu horizontally to make 4 slices approximately 1 centimetre thick.
- 2.** Combine lime juice, soy, garlic and salt in a flat bottomed bowl and marinate the tofu slices for at least one hour or overnight.
- 3.** Drain the tofu and reserve.
- 4.** The bean curd skin is probably a single piece folded into sixteen. Soak the skin in a sink of cold water for a minute or two and gently tease it apart. It will measure roughly 80 cm by 70 cm. Double the skin over and place a piece of tofu at the long end. Spread a few millimetres of filling on top then another piece of tofu. Repeat and repeat again.
- 5.** Wrap up the parcel and place sealed edge down on a lightly oiled baking dish. Bake at 170°C for around 45 minutes. Brush any pan juices back over the exposed surfaces.

I'm in the middle of a roasted swede passion currently. I love the colour a good swede makes when roasted so make sure you've got plenty of root veg to go along with the tofu, the fish and the fresh peas and broad beans. Just to make my job easier on the day, I will probably put the whole swedes, turnips, beetroot and potato in the oven the day before. I will add half a cup of water to the pan and

cover tightly. I will cook them until just tender but before the skins have cracked. This way, on Christmas Day I won't have to worry about the spuds being cooked in time, I'll just wedge them, toss them in a little olive oil and salt, and spread them on a tray in the oven to crisp. I'll put them in at the same time as the tofu.

Raspberry icecream

- 4 egg yolks
- 250 grams sugar
- 400 ml fresh cream
- 500 g raspberries

- 1.** Beat the egg yolks with the sugar until they are creamy and quite, quite pale in colour.
- 2.** Whip the cream until it can hold its own shape.
- 3.** Purée the fruit. For a more even texture, put through a strainer to remove the pips.
- 4.** Gently combine the yolks, cream and fruit, mixing all together thoroughly. Pour into an icecream container and freeze.
- 5.** After 1 hour, use a spoon to stir through the mix so as to prevent ice crystals from forming. Repeat as desired until set.

Serve the icecream with fresh stone fruits and a little crisp biscuit. Follow with coffee and a visual record of the day. The traditional nap is quite unnecessary given the lighter nature of the food. More time to play with the children. Cheers, Gary Thomas.

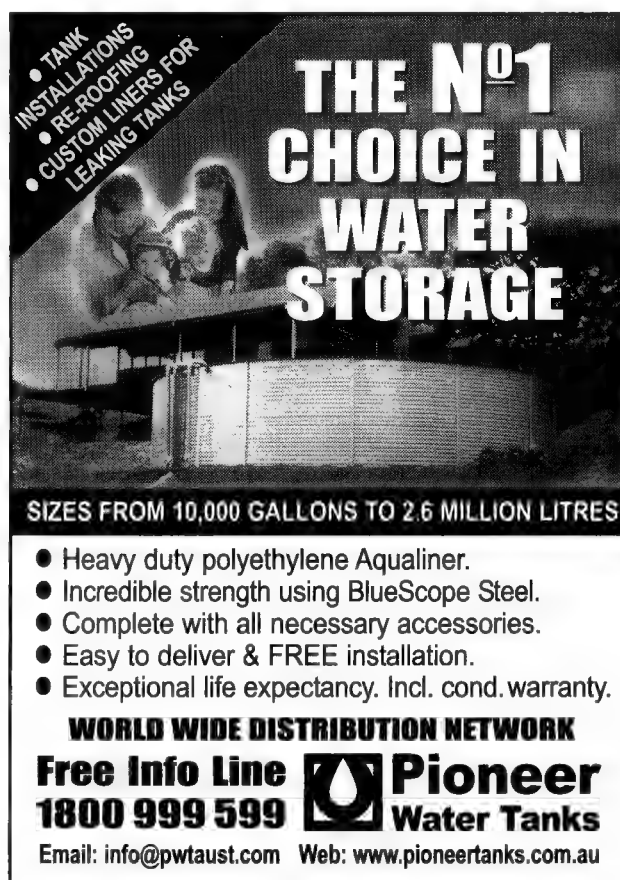


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Feeding the Prime Minister

Query: What do you serve a Prime Minister for dinner? Supposing you wanted to be nice to him, that is, and not lambast him for being a climate change-dodging weasel who's helped doom you and most of the rest of the bush to phones that creak and regular devastatingly intense bush-fires as the world heats up and creeks that dry up when they used to be reliable ...

Ahem. I forgot. We're being nice to him ... okay, how about feeding him the sort of food you think he likes? Childhood comfort food ... creamed canned sweet corn, maybe, with frozen peas and carrots.

Come to think of it, maybe he still eats like that every day, which is why he doesn't have any connection to the real world. You can't call canned sweet corn real food. Maybe if just once he was fed corn straight from the garden, a roast Indian game young rooster with lemon and tarragon stuffing, with freshly dug Tasmanian pink eye spuds, sun warmed strawberries and passionfruit, with icecream made from a happy backyard cow and a slice of duck egg sponge cake ... maybe then the world in all its generosity and complexity would suddenly seem worth saving?

Who cares about saving a world of canned creamed sweet corn?

Food is political. Good food connects you to the world. Refusing to eat bad food is one way to make change happen.

What is bad food? Most people nowadays have never eaten good food ... I think we are losing our capacity to judge what good tastes like. (I was offered a frozen then oven-baked pre-cut chip by a kid the other day. Glory be ... it wasn't that it was tasteless. I wish it had been. But it had the indefinable bad fat (read the back of the plastic bag — some of them even contain tallow) and flat frozen or preserved taste, and that kid is learning that food tastes like that. When he's 50 he'll think of pre-cut tallow-dipped chips as HIS childhood comfort food. Give me another nice bowl of long refrigerated something please, with a serving of tallow on the side...

Good food isn't frozen, or at least not for long. Make a homemade lemon sorbet and see — it tastes glorious the first day, great for another three ... but after three weeks the subtleties have gone. It tastes flat. The taste of frozen food.

Good food isn't refrigerated either, or again not for long. (Widespread refrigeration is a blessing on one hand,

but it's also meant that most humans now eat food that has had most of its flavour sucked away by prolonged cold.)

Just-picked strawberries chilled in the fridge for a few hours or overnight are lip-smacking. But after a week in the fridge their savour has gone. Kids who refuse yet another six-month chilled apple (picked far too green anyway so it's vaguely lip puckering) are merely showing good taste.

Which means good food has to be local, grown locally, shipped quickly and cooked and eaten even faster ...

Good food has no preservatives, except the old-fashioned ones of salt, sugar, smoke, sun or acid. You can taste a chemical preservative, which is why bread machine bread may be good but not stunning, not if it's made of packet mix bread flour with preservatives.

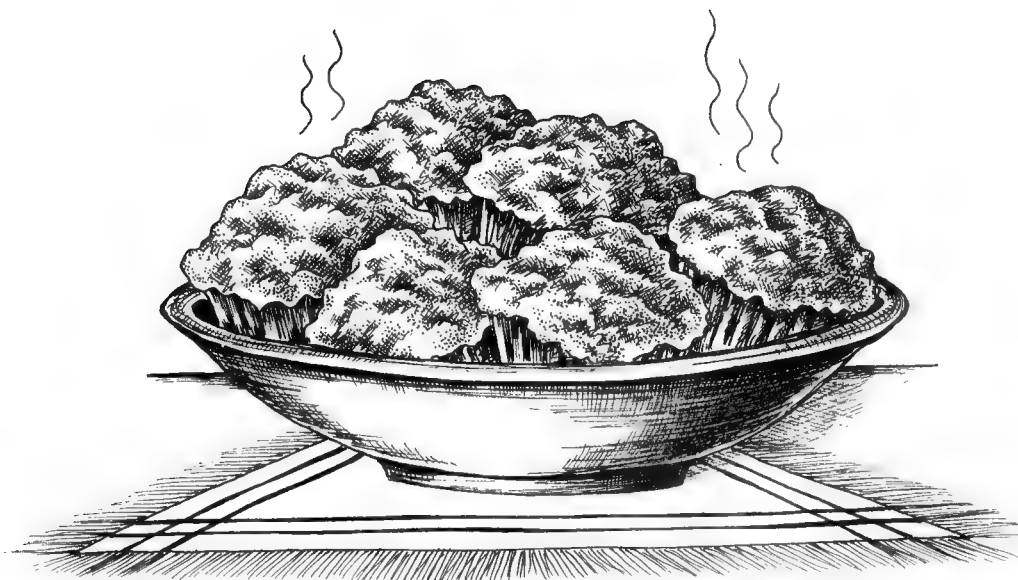
Good food is fresh. Good food is seasonal. But most of all, good food is idiosyncratic. It's just what the eater feels like at that moment, something that totally fulfils their fantasies. When you go to the homes of eager eaters you'll find that every household has its own style of food that suits its inmates — the great heaped bowls of fresh salads here, with the tang of lemon dressing, the fresh muffins every morning routine there, homemade soups in winter or long-cooked curries or obscene mounds of sweet corn every summer. Good food allows people to have their own passions in a way that frozen pizzas (choice of six not quite different flavours) never can.

Maybe good food also needs you to be hungry sometimes too, the sort of hungry that comes with physical achievement (not jogging three times around Lake Burley Griffin before Parliament sits).

You need to be hungry to really enjoy food ... and there are different sorts of being hungry. The hungry-after-purposeful-physical-activity is not the same as after an hour at a gym ... though this is an entirely untested hypothesis as I've never been to a gym.

Maybe no matter what you served the Prime Minister he'd never really feel hungry enough to catch its flavour.

So what does eating well mean? It means growing stuff yourself, or knowing how and where to buy, be given or swap reasonably local mostly organic tucker ... all of which needs a time rich life and lots of social contacts unless you happen to be a hermit with a really good garden. It means learning how to cook a basket of tomatoes oozing



Most of all, good food is idiosyncratic. When you go to the homes of eager eaters you'll find the style of food that suits its inmates — the great heaped bowls of fresh salads here, with the tang of lemon dressing, the fresh muffins every morning routine there, homemade soups in winter or long-cooked curries or obscene mounds of sweet corn every summer.

juice, a choko invasion or a dozen mushrooms from the back paddock that sprung up overnight and the yabbies the kids caught before breakfast, rather than following recipes.

Most of all it means time ... time to think about what you're going to grow so you can eat it in six weeks or six years or your grandkids in 60 years. Time to explain what you're doing as you fold an omelette over leftover ratatouille to your kids so they learn not just how to cook but also the subtle roles that food can play. Time to gossip as you do the washing up (washing up machines not only do you out of good gossip time — their noise inhibits conversation!)

Time to have a vegie garden that reseeds itself and gives you tucker even if you've neglected it for six months. Time for longwinded mutterings like this.

PS Having a vegie garden, not to mention chooks, also means your offspring feel free to ask six of their nearest and dearest mates home for dinner after the 'cricket' match (cricket in inverted commas is where neither team can remember the rules and next door's cattle have camped on the pitch) giving you three minutes notice to get another six meals on the table ... (wouldn't miss it all for quids).

Summer in the garden

Summer in Australia is a bit like winter in northern Europe — you need a bit of skill if you and your garden are going to thrive.

1. How to plant: Contrary to rumour you can plant trees *et al* right through summer — you just need to protect them a bit. Try to disturb the roots as little as possible; if it's bloody hot screen them with shade cloth or an old chook food bag for a few weeks; keep the soil moist with daily dribbles or a dripper or two.

2. How to feed: Don't bung plant food on dry soil (good compost or mulch is the exception here and even these are best

put on damp soil as all mulch will stop a light shower of rain getting to the root zone in the soil — it'll absorb it instead, like a wettext soaking up spilled milk on the bench. The worst is sprinkling on dry fertiliser then having a light shower of rain — the concentrated feeding will kill small, and even larger, roots and hence the plant. Wait for water till you feed. (The very best time to feed is half an hour before a thunderstorm. If you get struck by lightning please don't haunt me.)

3. How to water: Slowly! Water runs away on hard-baked soil. Install drippers, or place a bottle full of water by each plant with the tiniest hole so it can dribble out — that way you can quickly fill each bottle as you pass with the hose.

Coping with wind

We live in a valley — which means that when the westerlies or southerlies are howling up on the ridge we sit in a still calm garden and snicker. (North-westerlies are another matter — they scream down the valley with bushfire on their breath.)

Our sheltered position means that we can grow all sorts of things more easily than those in more exposed positions — avocados, tree dahlias — and the garden still looks lush when it's wind-blown and desiccated up top.

Wind can be one of the most destructive things in any garden system. But you can guard against it.

- **Plant deep.** When you plant a tree or shrub dig your hole three times as deep as it needs to be to encourage roots to go down. You can also push in an old 44-gallon drum with the bottom cut out for naturally shallow-rooted big trees, so they'll have to grow down before the roots can spread out. Lining the sides of the hole with any other barrier you have on hand works as well.

- **Water deep.** Frequent shallow watering encourages shallow roots. Rare deep watering encourages roots to go

down, not out.

- **Mulch wide.** A wide band of mulch outside the drip line encourages roots to spread.

Water wide. If you are drip irrigating keep the drips well away from the trunk to encourage greater root spread.

- **Don't stake — tether.** Staked trees get dependent on the stake for their support. Instead use half a dozen old panty hose or other supple tethers to stake the tree to pegs equidistant around the tree. The tree will shake a bit in the wind — and the movement stimulates the tree to grow a good strong root system to protect itself.

- **Plant and build your house in a sheltered spot with no view** — you can always walk up the hill for a view but if you build and plant in the teeth of the gale you will spend many, many years surrounded by leaning, dwarfed, bonsai specimens! Remember that your garden and surroundings become your view and that gives you another bonus view once everything has begun to grow.

- **Grow shelterbelts.** Whatever trees grow best in your area, planted at right angles to the worst winds. They will block much of the force of the wind. The best windbreaks are incomplete ones — not a solid wall that the wind will surf over and dump on the other side, but a series of baffles so that each one breaks the force of the wind slightly.

Storm warning!

- Low-growing shrubs are better able to survive strong winds than tall rounded ones.

- Thin out foliage and branches if possible to cut down wind resistance before a storm hits.

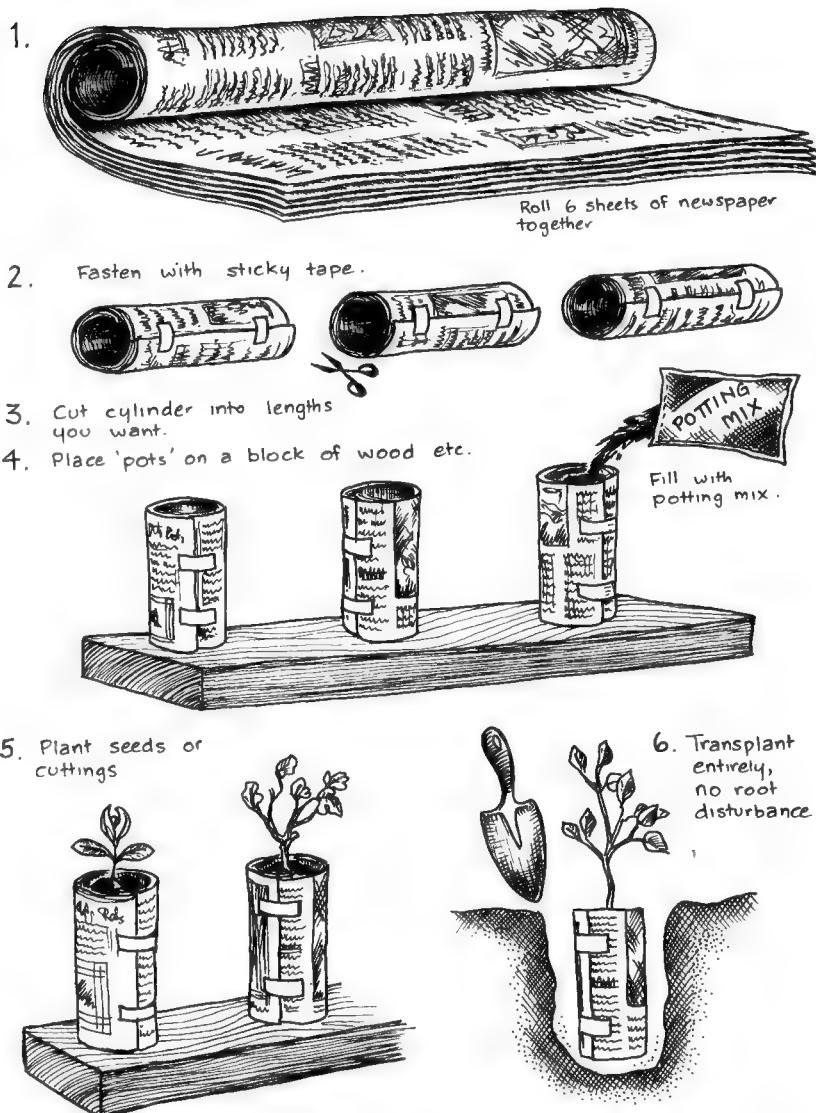
- Hedges survive wind better than fences.

- Lots of coastal palms will help break the force of the wind, and are easily replaced if they blow over.

- If a shrub or tree is uprooted you may be able to save it by replanting at once.

- Deep mulch helps protect plants and soil from high winds and torrential rain.

- Watch out for flimsy aluminium sheds, fences, hanging baskets and unsecured garden seats — they can all become lethal flying weapons!



Newspaper seedling pots. When you want to plant, plant pot and all — no root disturbance or transplant shock.

Seedling pots

Step 1. Roll six sheets of newspaper together, leaving as much space as you want in the centre.

Step 2. Sticky tape together.

Step 3. Cut into halves, quarters or thirds, depending on the size of the pot you want.

Step 4. Place the 'pots' on a block of wood or an old tarp. Fill with potting mix.

Step 5. Plant seeds or cuttings.

Step 6. When you want to plant, plant newspaper pot and all — no root disturbance or transplant shock.

Germination

Every year here I do an experiment. (It used to be an accidental one but now I do it deliberately.) I take carrot seed from at least five sources and plant the same quantity of seed in five separate blocks next to each other, then wait...

You'd think it would all germinate at exactly the same time, but it doesn't. Some comes up in about ten days, other seeds take three weeks or more to germinate, and some patches are thick with carrots and in others only about one in ten comes up.

Why? It appears to be that the older the carrot seed, the longer it takes to germinate. (But interestingly, that older seed still produces good carrots — if anything they result in slightly stronger growers than the young seed.) And poorly stored seed or very old seed may not germinate at all.

Where do seed suppliers get their seed? Some grow their own; others have several sources from Australian growers; others import their seed, and, as a consumer, you have no way of knowing how old the seed is.

And this is where I do a major cop out — one seed supplier in particular has almost uniformly bad germination rates. (No, it's not one that I've ever recommended in these pages, nor is it anyone who advertises in *Earth Garden*.) But I can't tell you who it is in case they sue us for a lot of money.

But if you buy seed regularly it's worth doing your own tests at least one year — buy a packet of the same variety from several sources, count the seeds you plant — then count the ones that came up. It's worth it — and you may get quite a shock.

Last year I tested corn seed and parsnip seed too

— parsnip seed in particular needs to be fresh to germinate. Some corn varieties from that supplier failed to germinate at all — not one plant. I suspect all the seed had been sourced overseas — wonderful varieties but not much use if you can't germinate them!

How to transplant a giant tree or shrub

I keep being asked by hopeful gardeners if they can move their five-year-old camellia or ten-year-old lemon tree, and the answer is of course they can (they can fly to the moon too with enough \$\$\$) ... but it's going to take a lot of work for the plant to survive.

1. Six months before you move, run a spade around the plant, at least six inches out from the drip line, where water drips from the outer leaves onto the ground.

Why? This will sever the roots that are travelling far and wide and the plant will start producing smaller, new roots nearer to its trunk to make up for their loss.

2. Choose a cool, cloudy day if you can to do the actual moving.

3. Water the plant really well several days ahead of the move.

4. Spread a large cloth or tarpaulin on the ground next to the plant. This will be its 'hammock' as you move it. (If you try to transplant it without a 'hammock' most of the soil will fall off as you go and this may damage the

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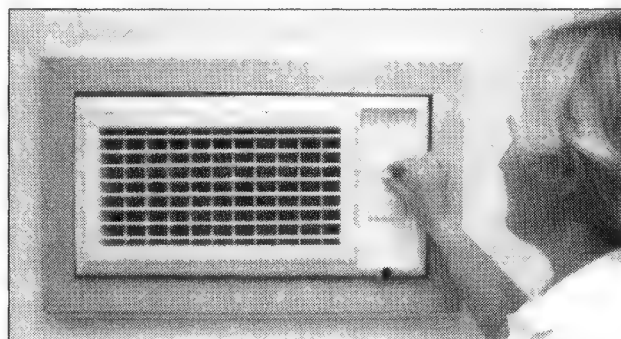
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roots even more.)

5. Now dig deeply all around the plant.

6. If you come across a stubborn root (there's always one) cut it neatly; don't pull it — it'll just cause even more damage.

7. Shift the plant, roots and as much soil as possible over to the hammock. Drag or, even better, get someone to help you lift the plant to its new hole.

8. The new hole needs to be half as big again as the roots. (Do not cheat at this stage.)

9. Trim off damaged roots, lower it carefully, pack soil down well.

10. Trim off about a quarter of the foliage of the plant, so that the reduced roots don't have to support as much greenery.

11. Water for ten minutes at once to settle the dirt and plant in the hole. Do not have a cup of tea or feed the dog first.

12. If the weather is very hot, dry or cold, spray the leaves with a seaweed-based foliar spray or Yates Stressguard according to directions on the bottle.

13. Water every day for a few weeks.

14. Feed after three months, though a spray of seaweed spray on the leaves according to directions on the bottle can help the plant re-establish itself quickly.

NB The bigger the amount of roots you can remove, the better the chances of success.

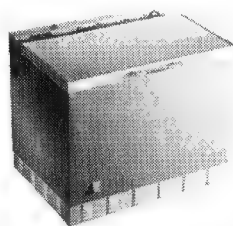
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What to plant now: everything! Just about any-way ...

Temperate to cold areas

Food plants: any tree you can cosset — see above. Bung in some seeds from your favourite fruits too — pick out the best seedlings next year to plant. Plant passionfruit and banana passionfruit vines, choko in temperate but not long-cold-winter climates; rhubarb (either plants or seeds), transplant strawberry runners, blueberry bushes, artichoke, basil (try the lettuce-leaved varieties), beans, beetroot, broccoli, burdock, cabbage, carrots (try the tiny, fat, fast-maturing ones in cold climates), sweet corn (fast maturing varieties only), kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, potatoes from mid-summer onward (you'll still get a crop by winter), white onions, salad greens like corn salad, mizuna, cress, red Italian chicory, silverbeet, spring onions, spinach, salsify, scorzonera, tomatoes (more vines for when the early planted ones slow down), turnips (try the crisp white Japanese ones — very mild without the sour after taste of the European ones), zucchini — that downy mildew is mostly a problem of old vines. New vigorous ones will give you fruit till the first big frost.

Flowering plants: Autumn flowering bulbs like Autumn crocus, nerines, tuberose, vallotta lily or *Zephyranthes*, then spring flowering bulbs from early February onwards; alyssum, stocks, plus seeds or seedlings of achillea, ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus, calendula, calceolaria, cleome, Iceland poppies, lunaria, lupins, nasturtiums, pansies, sunflowers (lots for the chooks in winter) and zinnias.

PS If you can, find plants of Atherton raspberries. They're a native raspberry — I bought mine from Daley's Nursery via Kyogle — you'll find them far more heat-, drought- and shade-tolerant than European ones, and the fruit is classic raspberry, fat and juicy and flavourful. Sadly wallabies love them as much as the introduced ones.

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Taking Special Photos of Your Land

How often have you wished you had some great photos of your special piece of planet Earth? Whether it's for your own pleasurable memories, to sell your property, to inspire others with a slide show, or even to sell to supplement your writings, there are many satisfying reasons to keep your camera handy in the garden. Here Jenny describes some successful strategies for getting the most from a pictorial approach to your garden or farm.

by Jenny Allen
Maleny, Queensland.

I WAS quietly shocked when my publishers told me I needed to get 260 photos of our land for my book — all to be coffee-table book standard.

The photos were to highlight the lushness of permaculture, explore the wonder of the garden minutiae ... as well as to make mulch look attractive. A tall order, but as the Queen of Mulchavia, I set to work.

For the next six months my partner, Dean Cameron, and I took a few hundred photos a day (fortunately they were digital) — taking over 20,000 photos. I started to look at the garden with a different eye and, to my pleasant surprise, never ran out of things to photograph. It was a delight to do and here are a few things I learnt along the way that may help you.

Maximise your colour

We get many visitors to our garden, and having seen my book* they're expecting the vibrant colours of a Ken Done. Sadly, we can disappoint them — 99.9 per cent of our garden is green. We just made the most of any splash of colour in the photographs:

- We took many close-ups of colourful flowers and fruit — especially colours that contrast well with all the green, like the crimson sweet Lillicoy passionfruit. It had contrasting blue and white striped stamens, waving to the bees like sea anemones. Yellow would not have had the same effect — unless it is very rich it can wash out the green.



A South African wildlife expert videoed this bat at night. He was quite excited, telling us he'd never seen one like this before. Only in the morning did he discover it was our clay pet! This photo stands out as it has a bit of ambiguity — people do a double-take.

Another special colour contrast was the luminous green katydid caught in the purple salvia.

- Wear colourful clothes — once again ones that contrast well with green — like oranges, purple and red. With the photo of me and the oranges (see the photo on the cover) I wore a light blue top with splashes of orange to offset and highlight the brilliant colour of the oranges. (Having orange hair helped as well!). We also had another photo on the back cover of *Earth Garden* — our son Ziggy holding large yellow pumelos and oranges. To highlight the colours of the fruit he wore an aqua shirt with touches of yellow and orange.

- Use colourful props — we were trying to take a photo of Ziggy with a 20-kilogram jackfruit, yet the jackfruit was a dull brown and the photo lacked zest. So we put the jackfruit on his colourful blue, red and yellow trike. This helped the jackfruit to stand out. (This photo was in the latest EG autumn edition — in black and white!)

Kids brighten up photos

It also helps to have kids looking as natural as possible. My sister came up from Melbourne to make sure her nine-month-old girl made it into my book — poking out behind cocoyam borders or popping out of our mushroom letterbox. And just before each shot she would take her shirt off to show off her cute rolls of flesh (that's the baby's, not my sister's). Flowers and kids together can be irresistible.

If you are wondering — take it

I remember the perfect photo — two naked four-



When taking photos of food and children try and frame them with an impressive feature, such as our bean-shaped table.

year-old boys eating mulberries out of the tree — with purple stains painting their bodies. The sun was going down, the colours perfect. I remember the shot so well as I didn't get it and wished I had.

Have your camera charged and ready

You are more likely to take that photo if your camera is ready and easy to access. When whipping it out is easy. People are often reluctant to have it on the table inside the door as it may be stolen — perhaps put it in a cupboard near the door, where you can run in and easily get it, even if you have dirty shoes.

Use the download as your feedback

If you want a great photo it helps to take them and then download as soon as possible and study how they turned out. It's a handy form of valuable feedback. You may realise you need more light or to get closer to that snake ...

Capture your property shining

Every now and then your property shines — for a moment — whether it is the wisteria momentarily flowering around your verandah, a special sunset, a green flush

after rain, sparkling leaves after a storm. Or a full moon shining through a crop of oats. Once again, if you're wondering whether to capture it — do. This could be the feature photo to send to others, or may be used if selling your property. It may only happen for a flash or a week — far better a photo than a regret. That's what can differentiate you from a professional photographer who rarely lives with its subject and therefore rarely experiences these special moments.

Meander with the camera

For five months my job was to take photos of our garden — I took about 150 a day. It was beautiful just meandering with an eye for a photo — things that I wouldn't normally see, ideas I would normally be too busy to think of. No need to hurry anywhere — just see things with a child-like sense of wonder.

Quirky photos

From my articles in *Earth Garden* you may be gathering that I am the Queen of Quirk (or, to some, the Queen of Corn) — as I love things out of the ordinary. The cactus growing out of the old boots, or a photo of Dean poking his head out of our Biolytix waste treatment system. He

told me not to use this photo for the slideshow launch of my book, as no one would be interested. So I popped it in at the last minute and it got the most laughs of all. Dean is more quirky than me though. When the publisher asked for a picture of me for the back cover of the book he took 42 photos of my reflection on the back of a shiny black scarab beetle. For some reason they didn't use it ...

Before and after photos

These can be the most powerful photos of all — and really show how your sweat was recycled into food and lush greenery. A few tips to make them work. Line them up exactly and have a reference point like the side of the house or a notable tree. Otherwise you may find that people won't believe you — and think that you've taken the first photo at the tip and the second one at the Royal Botanic Gardens.

And help the first one to be pretty ugly. When the earthmover has been in and the soil has been all turned over — or better still, when the earthmover is still there — for a bit of action. (I love exposed soil photos as you can actually see the different layers of the soil.)

You may need to manipulate a bit

Dare I say it — you may need to give a helping hand to your photos. I saw a beautiful see-through turmeric leaf

and thought it would be beautiful to get a shadow of the cat's whiskers (a native flower!) on its other side. It didn't look likely — the leaf was in a shady area and the cat's whiskers were 22 metres away. So I cut them both off and put them up into the sun — with the cat's whiskers behind. A beautiful shot that I wouldn't have got if I was a puritan.

For special effects try time lapse

If you have a camera with the time lapse feature you can do some extraordinary photography. Dean got a photo of wasp larvae hatching and then eating its way out of a cabbage white caterpillar, leaving just the shell of the (very dead) caterpillar. A sequence showing the power of integrated pest management in the garden — and helping us appreciate an important role of wasps.

Gather professional photos

If you happen to have a newspaper or magazine photographer take photos of your place you may want to ask if you can get a copy — often they charge a nominal fee for what can be a great photo. And it saves you paying for a professional — although by now you may just be one.

• **Jenny Allen** is the author of the coffee-table book *Smart Permaculture Design* and is the Media Officer for Biolytix Waste Treatment Systems.

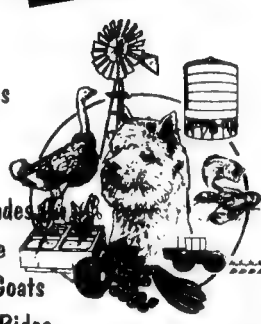
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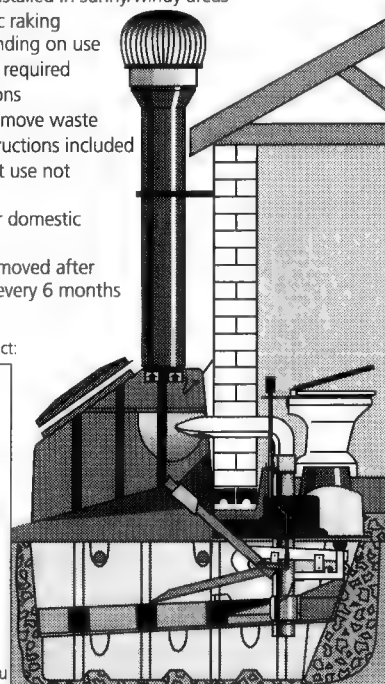
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A Tale of Tomato Sauce

Dead horse from the supermarket? Let Paul take you through the business of making your own supply of real tomato sauce, for use in pastas, pizzas and, if you're a traditionalist, on the meat pie. And if you want to, it's not a bad excuse for a barbie.

by Paul Crosbie
Trentham, Victoria.

IT ALL started when I walked into my back yard one day. I heard music coming from next door and people laughing and talking. I stuck my head over the fence and asked my neighbour what the occasion was? He replied it was "tomato time". "What's that?" was my response.

Well that was ten years ago and we have been making tomato sauce every year since, and the quantity is just getting bigger, as more people join in. Here is my method.

First purchase your tomatoes — the quantity will vary, depending how much sauce you want. I choose the Roma variety, and buy them by the case, but they must be ripe, and firm; any green ones are discarded. Most years you will get around 18 to 20 beer bottles of sauce to the case of tomatoes.

Sort out your tomatoes and discard any green, bruised or damaged ones. This is important because it can affect

the flavour of the finished product. The tomatoes are then washed in clean fresh water and allowed to drain.

With the aid of an able assistant the tomatoes are cut in quarters and placed in containers waiting for their turn in the mincer. (More about this process later).

While your assistant is cutting the tomatoes you get the fun job of washing and rinsing bottles. These must be spotless and well rinsed to remove any soap residue. The new beer bottles with the screw caps work just as well as the older bottles with the crown seal and I source them from reception centres as they tend to go through a lot of beer for some reason.

Once the bottles are clean and the tomatoes are cut the processing can begin; I use a largish mincer made by a company called 'REBA'; it has a tomato mincing attachment, which is designed to separate the skin and seeds from the pulp. It makes the process a lot easier but the same result can be achieved with a hand mincer and similar attachment for separating pulp from skins and seeds. Some people leave the seeds in their sauce — I find this makes it a little bitter so I remove them. I use a clean large plastic



Cut tomatoes ready for the mincer.



Paul uses a largish mincer with a tomato mincing attachment, which is designed to separate the skin and seeds from the pulp.



Skin and pulp separated. Put the tomatoes through the mincer twice to make a free-flowing sauce that is easier to get out of the bottle.



A production line helps streamline the process.



The easiest way to fill bottles is a plastic tub with a bottle filling attachment fitted.



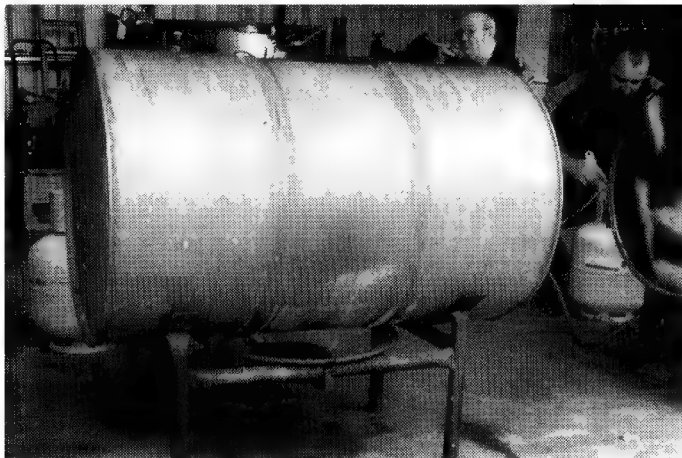
Avoid at all costs the seals that contain a grey paste-like substance. It melts when the bottles are boiled and you lose the contents of your bottles.



The bottles are wrapped in newspaper. This stops the bottles rattling against each other when the water in the drum boils.



A 44-gallon drum usually takes about 100 bottles. Place a rag over the bottles, again to stop them rattling during boiling, and fill the drum until there is about an inch of water covering your bottles.



I use a gas burner rather than have a fire burning. Let the drum boil for 25 to 30 minutes to ensure the sauce will pasteurise. With a lid of some sort for your drum it will boil a lot faster.

rubbish bin to catch the pulp as it comes from the mincer. It holds about 75 litres, but any similar container will do.

I generally pass the tomatoes through the mincer twice; that is to say, I put the skins through a second time as pulp tends to cling to the skin and I don't like to waste it. Besides it adds a little more juice to the sauce and tends to make a better free-flowing sauce that is easier to get out of the bottle. If I don't do it, I get a thicker pulp in the bottle that can be a pain to get out, so back in for a second squishing it is for me.

After all your tomatoes have been minced it is time to add some salt to taste. In my large container I add about a large handful or so, but if you don't wish to put salt in your sauce then don't! At this time I also add a little fresh basil: just a few leaves in the bottles, to give the sauce some flavour, but if you don't like basil, leave it out!

On to the bottling. There are a few methods to get the sauce into the bottles but I have found by far the easiest is a plastic tub with a bottle filling attachment fitted. Less messy, less waste and faster than a funnel; of course, if one is not available a funnel and plastic jug will do.

Be sure not to over fill the bottle — leave a space in the neck of the bottle about 70 mm down from the crown seal to allow for expansion, otherwise the bottle may crack as it is heated.

Once all your bottles are filled it is on to the capping; there are a couple of methods for this also, but first I will talk about the crown seals. There are two types I have used and one was an absolute disaster so I thought you may need to know about it. Avoid at all costs the seals that contain a grey paste-like substance. It melts when the bottles are boiled and you lose the contents of your bottles. By far the best are the crown seals that have an insert that covers the inside of the cap completely; you can usually find these in your supermarket with the home beer brewing kits.

On to capping. As I said, there are a number of methods including hand cappers but the best method is a small capping press. Use whichever method you like as long as the caps are on tight.

After capping, the bottles are wrapped in newspaper and placed in a large drum in layers. The paper is to stop the bottles from rattling against each other. A large cloth is placed in the bottom of the drum and the first layer of bottles is laid in on their edge, neck to bases, until the drum is full; usually about 100 bottles to a 44-gallon drum. A rag is placed in the drum, on top of the bottles, again to stop them rattling during boiling, and the drum is filled with water until there is about an inch of water covering your bottles.

I use a gas burner but I have seen an open fire used, and this is the method my neighbour employed, but I prefer gas rather than have a fire burning. Bring the drum to the boil and let it boil for 25 to 30 minutes or so: this will ensure the sauce inside the bottles will pasteurise. Allow the drum to cool down overnight and unpack the next morning. If you provide a lid of some sort for your drum it will boil a lot faster of course.

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Aerial baiting of wild dogs In Kosciuszko National Park

Jim raises concerns about the impact on the dingo and the Kosciuszko environment of current feral animal control methods.

by Jim Kelton

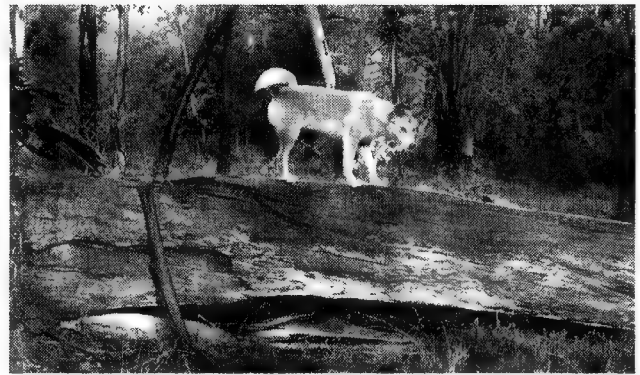
Tumbarumba, New South Wales.

IAM a high country resident sharing a home in the forests with a family of pet dingoes, surrounded by the decimated remnants of a pure wild dingo population on the western edge of Kosciuszko National Park.

The dingoes cannot speak for themselves so I am attempting, most likely as a lone voice in the wilderness, just like the mournful call of a single dingo on a moonlit night, to ask you and your readers to have a good look at the adjacent photo of a pure dingo taken by me along the western edge of Kosciuszko National Park in 2005. This may well be one of the last opportunities for you and the rest of the public to see such a sight around Kosciuszko National Park under plans currently being put forward by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, DEC, one of a number of puppet organizations of the NSW government, to re-commence 1080 poison aerial baiting of wild dogs (and dingoes) in OUR much revered high country national park.

This is, of course, not a recommencement of 1080 poison baiting in our Kosciuszko National Park as DEC has been conducting a systematic campaign to exterminate all dingoes and wild dogs in the park for a number of years now, and in particular in the north of the park in and around Tumbarumba. This program has been in association with other state government and quasi-government agencies. 1080 poison does not discriminate between wild dogs or dingoes in inflicting a most horrible and painful death to its victims. It affects not only canines in the park, regardless of recent claims by representatives of DEC, and is deadly when ingested by humans.

What is most frightening is that this is the year 2005, a period of rapid world technological advance, and our leaders and environmental managers (including National Parks and Wildlife Service (DEC) the various Rural Lands Protection Boards and associated Wild Dog Destruction Boards, Forests NSW and others), can come up with strategies that can only be described as barbaric methods of managing a complex environmental problem. Poisoning and trapping animals are methods which have been used by humans for literally thousands of years and in many documented instances those actions have led to the extinction of wildlife across the world and even the total collapse of entire ecosystems. We are currently witnessing this process in Kosciuszko National



A pure dingo on the western edge of Kosciuszko National Park photographed by Jim in 2005. This may well be one of the last opportunities for you to see such a sight around Kosciuszko National Park.

Park and adjacent state forests as a sad consequence of those actions and the total mismanagement of our parks and state forest by a resource-poor state government.

Whilst the presence of wild dogs, foxes and cats are a major threat to our unique wildlife, natural ecosystems, and human economies, the effective removal of the dingo as part of the feral animal control process will lead to a rapid escalation in extinction pressures upon many of our small and medium-sized mammal species which no doubt is already in process. Scientists believe the dingo had established a very important ecological association with our unique mammalian species at the time of European settlement. That link is all but destroyed by our land managers.

By escalating the 1080 poison baiting program all that will be achieved will be to lock current and future generations into a never-ending feral animal control process to control cats and foxes which will replace wild dogs and dingoes as those populations are exterminated by the state government.

Whether DEC likes it or not the dingo was, and still should be, an important link in our high country natural ecosystems and the treatment of the dingo, sending it into oblivion in the same way as the Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacine*), will not achieve the results that were intended by some land managers who might still have an environmental conscience.

Furthermore, DEC policies such as creating protected 'core populations' of pure dingoes at isolated and scattered locations across NSW national parks, whilst causing the destruction of all other populations at other locations selected by DEC, is totally inadequate, and will eventually only lead to the same results, the extinction of our dingoes in the wild and the eventual extinction of a vast array of small and medium-sized native fauna throughout the state of NSW.

Will that be when the NSW government and the public realise their mistakes... too late? The image of the last *Thylacine* pacing up and down in a zoo compound should still haunt those in the public with a conscience. However, it was too late for the *Thylacine* and it will certainly be too late for the dingo.

Jim Kelton, PO Box 242, Tumbarumba, NSW 2653. Ph / Fax: (02) 6948 3927. Email: jim.kelton@bigpond.com.

Living In Fowl Times

by Alanna Moore

From Transylvanian naked necks to Araucanas — Alanna welcomes reader' queries about living with chooks. Write to Earth Garden, PO Box 2 Trentham, Vic, 3458 or email info@earthgarden.com.au.



HI THERE chookies. Another season has passed so swiftly, your spring chickens may well be young pullets by now and I'm sure that most of you will be having no problems whatsoever with any of your fowl. They are hardy beasts; don't be put off by some of the crook chook letters I receive!

As for the Asian Avian Flu, it never started in a free range system! Keeping fowl in overcrowded, unhealthy, battery cage conditions creates the breeding ground for deadly new bugs. New diseases are always just around the corner with unnatural, industrialised livestock farming. With the reduced levels of ozone these days, the increased ultra-violet radiation from the sun can cause untold mutations of virus and bacteria.

As consumers we have the power to not buy eggs from caged birds. And to produce our own is even better.

Hoping for fun fowl times and lots of fresh yummy eggs to ya!

Chooks eating own eggs

Hi Alanna,

I am having a lot of trouble with a chook or chooks eating their own eggs!! We have tried some horrible concoctions of chilli, mustard and horseradish to no avail. I mix it up and then pop it back in the egg and tape it up or I will soak some cotton wool with it and put in the egg. I guess the next step is isolating them one by one and seeing what happens, although this could be tricky!!

Have you any other marvelous ideas?? Thank you, Susie.

Dear Susie,

I'm sorry to dampen your enthusiasm for gastronomical bomb making, but it seems your chooks have developed an incurable spiced egg habit.

Sadly, chooks can learn bad habits fast and they won't be unlearned. If one is doing it they probably all are! Sadly, the axe is the only solution now.

When they are replaced with new hens, make sure they have plenty of nesting areas and a good level of protein in their diet (20 per cent is optimum for layers). That will make this problem much less likely to arise again.

Bringing the free rangers back home

Alanna,

I would like to know if I can let my girls (12 of them) wander around open paddocks (on a farm) without a rooster to watch over them and if I let them out will they all stay together or will I have trouble getting them back in their yard?

Thank you for your time. Regards, Jeannie.

Dear Jeannie,

I'm sure your girls will happily wander over open paddocks, rooster or not. Being creatures of habit you will have to first get them into a suitable routine, then they will always come home to roost — like clockwork.

All that running around will get them hungry. Just call them in at dinner time and feed them in their pen. Before then they would have to grow accustomed to any new pen, by being locked up for a couple of weeks before you let them out.

Once this routine is established you are best to not let them out to roam until after morning egg laying has happened, or you may never find any eggs.

Ear mites?

Dear Alanna,

I have a small flock of chooks in my backyard and over the years have had few problems. However, for some time now my poor chooks have been shaking their heads! My mother tells me that they shake their heads like that because they have ear mites.

I put them on a detox routine consisting of chopped onions steeped in hot water that I put in their drinking water. (Incidentally, I was very surprised to find that they absolutely loved the bits of onion floating in it.) I also mixed some wood ash and garden dusting sulphur together and then dusted them with it. (I just made this up, I have no idea if it would do anything.) I also bought some herbal nit spray and attempted to spray this in and around their ears.

So far I've only done all this once (will do again in a week or so) but there is no change in their condition. Please help, Alanna, before I start shaking my head! Are there such things as ear mites? Why do my chooks shake their

heads? Has anything I've done been helpful? What can I do to solve this problem? Thanks for your time, Raelene.

Dear Raelene,

I don't know if you live in an area where stickfast fleas are prevalent (they are not here in the deep south) — but these little nasties get stuck in to chooks' heads, infesting the face, comb and wattles, and causing extreme irritation. It's the only cause I can think of, without being there to check them.

The herbal nit spray you tried may be very irritating if it gets in their eyes; keep it for head lice. A garlic detox could be useful — garlic being a great cure-all (unlike onion).

An old remedy for stickfast fleas is some powdered sulphur mixed in lard and rubbed onto affected areas. Modern vaseline is better to use than lard nowadays. Also, if it is fleas, everything is going to need to be cleaned out thoroughly and sprayed with pyrethrum solution. Oh what fun. Good luck!

If you call your chooks at dinner time, and feed them in their pen, they will always come home to roost.



Incubation problems

Hi Alanna,

My mother-in-law has given me an *Earth Garden* book. It is the first one I have read and I find it very interesting. I am 61 years young and have just moved from the city to rural country in the last 14 years. I have a small incubator, for 42 eggs. I only put six eggs in to start with, then progress if everything is all right. Three years ago I had no problems, but not so this year. So far, not many have hatched from the first batch. Then four lived for



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five days, then died one after the other.

Last time I fed them Farex, this time I have done the same. This time I have not been able to clean the cage out as often. They are in a box with food and water and a lamp with a 40-watt bulb to keep them warm. Our temperature at the moment is a minimum of 8°C, maximum 17°C. Could you please give me some advice? Greg Smith, Atherton Tablelands, North Queensland.

Dear Greg,

What's wrong with a nice broody hen to hatch your eggs and keep chicks safe and snug? Much better results than an incubator and much less work. If you don't keep an incubator or chick brooder clean, bacteria levels can get dangerously high and this may account for fatalities.

Disinfect everything with a proprietary product or dilute tea tree oil. Put older chicks out in the sun to graze on fresh lawn in the daytime, if you are able, but not where other fowl have been kept for at least six months. That will help their digestive systems become accustomed to normal bacteria.

Farex should be OK for the first few days, but they would need more protein for good growth and a commercial chick feed would probably be better for a balanced diet, plus the odd kitchen scraps, ripe banana and other treats!

More crook chooks

Hi Alanna,

We have three chickens of different breeds ranging in age from eight months to over five years. They never leave their three-metre-square multi-level chook palace as we live in fox territory. They co-habit with two guinea pigs.

All has been well until the old girl got diarrhoea. She's had it for a few weeks now and it's so loose that it accumulates on the feathers around her back end making her very smelly and no doubt uncomfortable. I've wormed them all with a commercial wormer in their water with no obvious improvement. She seems quite happy despite this affliction and her appetite isn't affected (we provide commercial chook tucker — Little Red Hen — and scraps). The youngest chook has now got a dirty back end too, although not as extreme. The Pekin cross seems unaffected. The loose droppings aren't bloody, so I don't think it's coccidiosis.

What do you think? Any advice would be much appreciated. Kind regards, Jane, Stawell, Victoria.

Hi Jane,

Coccidiosis is generally a problem with young chicks in artificial environments. I think that whatever it is causing the problem, they will all be getting it if you don't start to quarantine the crook ones. Give them a sickie break. Put them in their own pen, cosy and warm. They won't have to fight off the others at tucker time then. Dose them up with garlic in the water (a clove, finely chopped, per bird). Some liquid vitamins could help too. Find out what the cause is and consider a prophylactic routine. Monthly dosing with garlic is a good preventative, for instance.

As for the guinea pigs, I gave up keeping covies with fowl when the poor things got badly infested with chook lice and some died soon after.

Worm woes

Hi Alanna,

Yesterday my teenage daughters burst into the house loudly announcing that our beloved chooks have passed worms in their droppings!! I don't know how to get rid of these parasites without some kind of poison from the vet. Do worming drugs get into the eggs we eat? I was hoping you had the perfect natural solution for this problem. Also, we are hoping to keep bees in our rather large chook yard — do bees get along with chooks?

Many thanks, Mike O'Connor.

Hi Mike,

Keep your bees well above chook level and you should be right with them.

As for the dreaded worms — are your birds healthy and perky? If so, don't worry too much! Healthy, unstressed chooks are not overly bothered by them. Worms can get ugly during wet weather conditions, however, and yes, any drugs will be passed through to eggs (don't eat any for six weeks afterwards).

Natural ways to prevent worm build-up include a routine dose of a finely chopped garlic clove and/or a pinch of sulphur in food each month, plus vermifuge herbs, such as fennel, tansy, wormwood, grown in the pen for self-medication by birds.

The compost cure

Keeping birds on the same spot forever can lead to worm build-up and soil degradation. Rotating birds through different areas to avoid this is ideal. Either have several pens, a moveable pen, or electric mesh fencing to achieve this. (Perhaps your large chook yard could be divided up?)

Otherwise you can create a composting layer on the floor of a permanent pen, known as a deep litter system, by keeping it covered with a thick layer (around 20 cm) of high-carbon materials to soak up the chook droppings. Sawdust and wood shavings, garden weeds, shredded paper, chopped straw (not mouldy!) are ideal. Try to keep it dry in the pen.

This composting material will break down to provide an antibiotic effect for birds, who love to pick through it. It will help to prevent coccidiosis amongst young chicks.

To harvest this material for use in your garden, scrape off the top three quarters of the deep litter and put it into a worm farm or compost heap to further break down. Make sure it is thoroughly moistened before being left to rot over several weeks. By leaving the bottom layer in the pen intact, this acts as a bacterial starter brew for the new materials on top.

I love to see the magical transformation of waste into plant food! Your hens will stay healthier and your garden will love you for it too!



Questions & Answers

with Jackie French



If your apricot is refusing to give fruit, if the earwigs get more roses than you do or you'd like a recipe for fermented snail repellent or homemade carob (but don't bother, it may be the colour of chocolate but so is the stuff in babies' nappies), email Jackie at info@earthgarden.com.au.

Pollination problems

Hi Jackie,

Can you help with this question? I have read many books and magazines and am unable to get the answer.

I have an orchard with a mix of fruit and nut trees and would like to plant some more fruit trees. How far apart do fruit trees need to be for cross-pollination to occur? I understand this is required for plums, cherries, pears and apples. I would like to know the maximum distance so I can plan my thresholds.

Much appreciated. Robert, Bungendore.

Robert,

Ask me an easy one, like the rate the universe is expanding ... and if you do find a book that says "plant trees x metres apart for good pollination", throw it away! Pollination is complex — it depends on the type of fruit, variety, the health and abundance of bees in your district and all the factors that influence them, the other trees in your orchard, wind.

The best answer I can give you is to be flexible — if flowers aren't being pollinated, take action. But just as a start:

Most fruit trees depend on bees to transfer pollen onto the stigma. (Some fruit trees though are wind pollinated, a few by wasps, and a few others by birds, and the odd one by a variety of insects.)

Bees will fly a kilometre or more — but they aren't dumb, in a food foraging capacity anyway. If there is blossom nearer they'll go to it. So if there's a bare mountain, with only two trees on it, both plums, the bees will probably go to both trees. But if there were lots of flowering gums — forget it, the bees will go for the easier tucker. Result: no pollination for the plums.

Pollination is one of an orchardist's worst problems — and one answer is to encourage an apiarist to keep bees in a commercial orchard.

The other great problem is that compatible trees must flower at the same time — and they often don't in some climates, even when they are supposed to.

A rule of thumb? Keep pollinators as close as possible — next to each other if you can, or at least with no other tree that flowers at the same time between them. You can get away with longer distances in good years — especially if

there are lots of bees in your area — but in a wet and windy spring (they do happen ... well, hopefully, will happen again) you may find that you have a massive crop failure.

At the very most I wouldn't plant pollinator trees more than five trees or twenty metres apart ... and that is really pushing it.

I have to stress though that this is so general that it's not entirely accurate — like most biological generalisations! We get good kiwi fruit pollination with one male in four hectares of rambling overstuffed orchard and garden, with the females scattered all over the place, rambling up trees and over fences. But I've also known a female kiwi fruit to fail to fruit with a male two metres away in an otherwise bare courtyard — and she didn't fruit till the male was entwined in her branches.

This may be because bees can be conservative, like birds — they'll go to one type of flower or fruit at a time, so you do tend to get better coverage than you would with bees randomly slipping here and there. And bees pass on their knowledge to other bees ... and I'm now starting to make this a treatise.

Just remember — you can't be too conservative with pollination, even if nature is sometimes extraordinary radical. All the best, Jackie.

PS Female flowers survive longer on healthy, well-fed fruit trees (up to three times longer from personal experience; may well be longer) and the longer they survive, the greater the chance of pollination. Female flowers may also drop early on young trees.

PPS Many more fruit trees are partially self-fertile than is commonly believed. In other words, you'll get some fruit from many fruit trees even without a pollinator, but their cores will be misshapen and seed may not be viable. Some trees seem to be more self-fertile some years than others — mountain paw paws, for example, need a male pollinator in cooler years, but the females set fruit without pollination in warmer, wetter years.

I've had incredible problems trying to get the right almond and cherry trees to blasted well flower together. These days I grow self-fertile varieties.

PPPS The easiest solution then might be to multi-graft

onto existing trees. But with luck you may not need to do anything much. Many commercial varieties nowadays don't need pollination — there's a good chance that all your trees are already okay. There are also good, almost universal, pollinators like Golden Delicious and Roke-wood apples (both late apples and well worth growing anyway) and Japanese and European plums basically just need another variety next door. It's unlikely the previous owner has planted any peaches that need cross-pollination — most don't and they probably already knew they needed pollinators for cherries or almonds, assuming they didn't buy the now more common self-pollinating varieties. The only likely problem may be hazelnuts, as many people don't realise they need pollinators.

Recipes for gloop

Hi Jackie,

I remember reading your recipe for your 'Gloop' in an *Earth Garden* magazine I borrowed from the library. I photocopied the article and do you think I could find it? I was wondering if you would mind sending me the recipe again please. Kind regards, Ann Marie.

Hi Ann Marie,

Ahem, which gloop do you mean? Could be washing up gloop, general washing gloop, or the gloop that is a really good brown lentil and tomato stew ... gloop is a big concept!

Washing up gloop

4 cups water
1 cup grated yellow soap
1 cup washing soda
1 cup white vinegar

Bring water to the boil; add soap; take off heat and stir till dissolved. Add soda, stir till blended, add vinegar, stir. Store in sealed container out of the reach of pets and children.

Basic washing gloop

(Good for cleaning clothes but also baths and other surfaces — but do test on each new fabric or surface as it may harm or stain some)

4 cups water
1 cup grated yellow soap
1 cup washing soda
1 cup white vinegar
1 tbsp eucalyptus oil

Bring water to the boil, add soap, take off heat and stir till dissolved. Add soda, stir till blended, add vinegar and oil, stir. Store in sealed container out of the reach of pets and children.

Eucalyptus wool mix

4 cups water
1 cup grated yellow soap
1 cup methylated spirits
1 tbsp eucalyptus oil

Bring water to the boil, add soap, take off heat and stir till dissolved. Add meths and oil, stir. Store in sealed container out of the reach of pets and children.

All of these set quite solid; you'll need to dissolve a tablespoon in half a bucket of water for most purposes — don't bung it straight in a washing machine for example. But a little straight on a sponge is a good cleaning paste, but again — check on each surface! Especially new ones like fibreglass and various artificial finishes.

All the best, Jackie.

Beetroot marmalade

Hi!

I've been reading your so great magazine, and I read about Jackie's beetroot marmalade. Would you please send me this recipe; today I got some from my garden and I would like to try it.

Regards, Cecilia.

-

Hi Cecilia,

Beetroot marmalade is a glorious colour and while it is beetrooty it's also marmaladey! In fact the two flavours go together really well ... beetroot cooked with orange juice is good, or baked beetroot served with a dressing of 4 tbsps olive oil, half teaspoon salt, 2 tbsps orange juice, 1 tbsp grated orange rind and 1 tsp French mustard is wonderful. Grated raw beetroot is good with the same dressing.

Beetroot marmalade

Ingredients

1 large raw beetroot, peeled and grated
1 kg oranges — about 5
2 tsp citric acid
7 cups of water
7 cups white sugar
juice of 2 lemons

Cut off thin shreds of orange rind with as little white as you can. Cut the orange flesh into chunks, again cutting off all white — it makes the marmalade bitter and cloudy. Save all juice. Cover with half the water and let stand overnight.

Tie the seeds and pith into a bit of muslin or old (clean) stocking and cover with the rest of the water and add the citric acid. Stand overnight.

Next day add the grated beetroot to the contents of the bowl with the pith. Simmer till soft. Discard the bag of seeds and pith.

Add the contents of the other bowl. Simmer about 40 minutes till peel is soft.

Now add the sugar and lemon juice. Stir without bringing it back to the boil till the sugar is dissolved, then boil for about 15 minutes, stirring only a little to stop it sticking or till a little gels on a cool saucer. Pour into hot sterilised jars. Put lids on. Keep in a cool dark place.

PS This is also good with half grapefruit instead of some of the oranges, or half lemons or limes or cumquats instead of some of the oranges.

PPS Beetroot leaves can be eaten cooked like spinach, or a few very small ones in salad. I add grated beetroot to chocolate muffins — makes them richer, darker and moister; also sometimes add grated peeled beetroot to bread dough.

Food for poultry

Dear Jackie,

I hope this missive reaches you OK. I am developing a permaculture poultry set-up in the vain hope that I might someday manage to keep laying chooks without having to feed them supplementary grain.

A permaculture forest in our droughty, frosty, waterlogging environment is a tall order. Some successes so far:

Japanese/Chinese raisin tree
Solanum seaforthianum (climber)
 African boxthorn
 Mulberry
 Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*).

Further, you mentioned somewhere, I think, you needed a solution to your wastepaper probs. My solution: I bought a shredder from Big W — \$15 I think it cost. Result, mulch, mulch and more mulch.

Since it's low in nitrogen, it's an ideal complement to chook litter! Best wishes, Ian.

Dear Ian,

Thanks for the shredder idea!

How about trying persimmons, plums, medlars, loquats, tamarilloes. Nuts and carob give good protein but either need to be opened or in the case of carob pods, cooked.

Our best chook food tree is avocados ... keep them

in a shelter for three years, winter and summer, or start them off under the shade of other trees. Plant all the varieties you can get hold of — or at least Hass and two others — and you'll have fruit all year round, high

in protein and chooks love it. (So do our wombats — have looked fat and glossy even in the drought since they discovered windfall avocados. Wallabies too.)

But the two most productive crops per hectare still have to be maize (not sweet corn but the very drought-hardy hard-kernelled stuff) and potatoes, though they need cooking for chooks. But a small plot of maize gives an amazing crop and keeps for twelve months. Also sunflowers, which chooks love. Or bunya nuts if you don't mind a twelve-year wait!

To be honest our chooks mostly eat our leftovers — not so much the leftovers from our meals, though they love those too (but feeding table scraps is illegal in some areas and you need to be careful with hygiene too) but the leftovers from our fruit trees and vegie garden, especially perennial runner beans — the dried beans need to be cooked but you get masses.

All the best, Jackie.



A small plot of maize gives an amazing crop and keeps for twelve months, like sunflowers, which chooks love. Or give them bunya nuts if you don't mind a twelve-year wait!

Sexing chook eggs

Hi Jackie,

In the June–August edition Debbie was asking about sexing chook eggs. Curious, I asked a few of the older generation poultry keepers that I know (curiously both last names are McDonald but are unrelated). Both swear that to get mostly hens in a clutch you must set the



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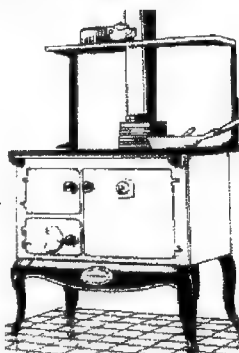
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hen only in winter. I have tried this and of a clutch of nine eggs got only one rooster. For roosters set them in summer. This theory gets even more interesting as the two people in question don't know each other and live some 900 kilometres from each other! A poultry breeder I know crosses white leghorns over Rhode Island Red and says that every white chick is female and every red one is male. He makes a living out of selling point-of-lay pullets and day-old chicks so I'd reckon that it must be right. I hope this helps.
All the best, Tammy.

Homemade stove black

Dear Jackie French!

In *Earth Garden* 132 Jessica asks for a recipe for homemade stove black. I have a nice Morsoe cental heating stove from 1924 where we cook all our meals. It heats five radiators, warms up the bathroom floor and gives us plenty of hot water. To make it black I pour some cold coffee on the lukewarm surface and rub it well with an old newspaper. The mixture of coffee, dust and grease make a fine black stove.

Sincerely, Henrik Rudolph, Englemark, Dk 4160 Denmark.

Low sugar preserves and cordials

Dear Jackie,

My husband, our two young teenage girls and I have set up a new home on 17 1/2 acres of virgin land, which over 25 years ago housed beef cattle. We are hoping and planning to become self-sufficient (quickly we hope). Part of that plan is for me to get preserving plus making our own cordial. But I am a diabetic and most recipes call for more sugar than anything else. Is there a way of making preservatives and cordial without so much sugar or none at all? Plus, what is the best fruit to preserve and besides a lemon tree what else can I use to make cordial?

Please help us become better self-sufficient small farmers!

This is what I have gathered so far: lady finger and sugar banana trees (still in their pots), one Meyer lemon (planted last year which will need to be relocated now since the house is built, as our puppy loves to chase the alpacas in the paddock with the lemon tree, stopping to eat the lemons, bringing them home and leaving them on the back door step chewed up for me) and one macadamia tree (going great). In the next couple of weeks I hope to get a variety of apples, nectarines, plums, peach, mango, avocado, apricot, mandarin and orange. Not forgetting the pistachio I hope (both my husband and youngest daughter are allergic to nuts but find that macadamia, pistachio and pecans don't affect them).

I love your *Season by Season* (which really got me started on our plans right away). Where can I get a pistachio tree from?

Your Garden Sister, Cherie.

Hi,

Don't forget to plant both male and female pistachios!

The trouble with avoiding sugar is that it's a pretty good preservative in its own right — a very sweet, very acidic environment is inhospitable to many bacteria. It's easy to make cordial without sugar — substitute any of the artificial sweeteners for the sugar in the recipe, or make a strong stevia solution from home-grown stevia herb (but be aware that there have been reports — am unable to confirm them — that very high doses may be carcinogenic) and use that for sweetening.

The taste will be much the same but even in the fridge your cordial may only last a few days.

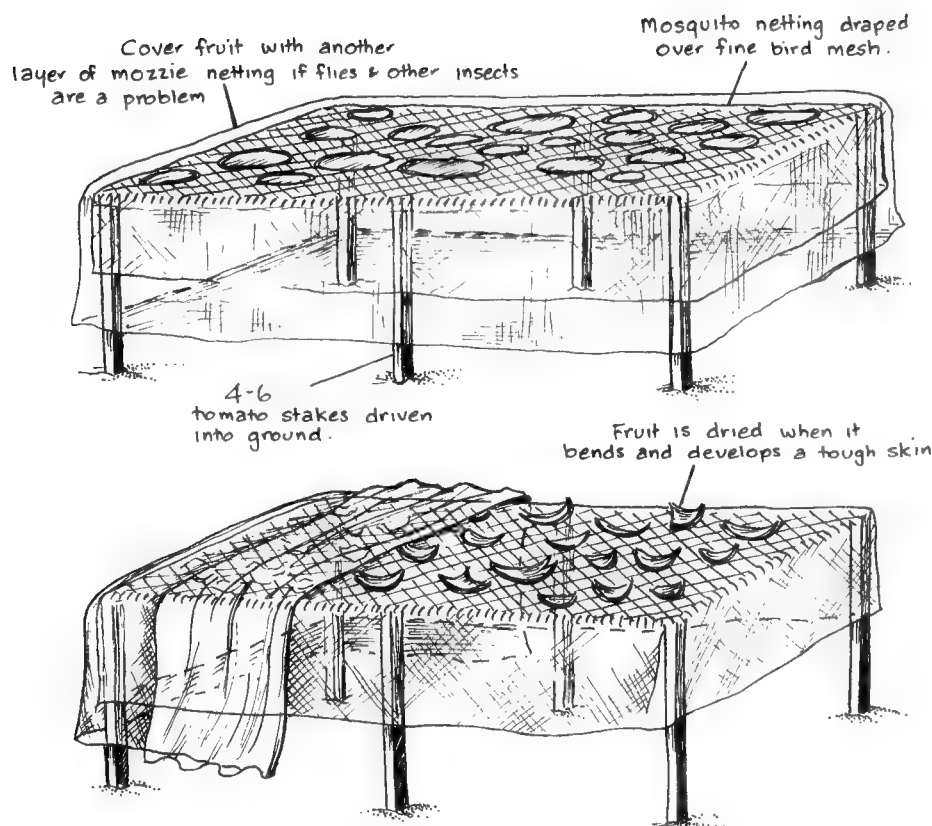
One option is to buy small plastic drink bottles — the sort kids can take drinks to school in — and fill them with a few days' worth of the homemade cordial, then take out one at a time and keep it in the fridge till it's used up. You could also use a Fowlers bottling kit or use an oven-preserving method to sterilise your own sealed jars of cordial ... but I think freezing would be much easier!

A few cordial recipes below. I make all our cordials on a lemon or lime base, but then add other fruit according to what's around. I think the mixed berry is our favourite. We grow loganberries and thornless blackberries pretty much just to use for cordial, and lilly-pillies are mostly used for jelly (jam) or cordial too. Mulberries also make the most stunning cordial.

As for preserving — again, freezing and drying don't need sugar. We don't grow many fruits these days to preserve, as there's never a time when there aren't at least twelve different sorts of fruit to be picked out in the orchard, so we tend to be fully occupied eating up what's cropping. (As I write this in early spring we have avocados, limes, lemons, mandarins, a few late apples, tiny early almonds (I pickle them like pickled walnuts), calamondins, chilaxayote, melons by the dozen, including one ten metres up a pecan tree which I'm afraid is going to bong someone on the head when it falls ... must either put up a danger sign or get the stupid thing down ... cumquats, tangelos, Chinese custard apple (one), navel and blood oranges, cherry guavas, the first of the elderberries and the first tiny wild strawberries, macadamias ... should have mulberries in about a week.

Anyway, back to the best fruit to preserve — some fruits are delicious preserves in their own right, not just as a way to keep the surplus or keep yourself in fruit in a slow time. Apricots, apricots, apricots ... a home-dried apricot is a thing of delight, and they are easy to dry — I've dried small varieties by just rolling them out onto foil then rolling them over a few times on a stinking hot dry day — takes about three days to dry them and didn't even take them in at night. But that really needs a good dry drought — didn't even take the stones out.

Dates (you need a male and female — not good for diabetics though as so sweet), peaches (go for a thick-fleshed late Golden Queen for drying and cut them into slices



A simple home drier. In hot dry times you can risk leaving the fruit out overnight, unless there are inquisitive possums or wallabies about.

first, with a quick dip in lemon juice to stop them going too brown) and mangoes if the climate is right — dried mango is delicious. Once you get into drying, fruit leathers are fun — a mix of several mashed fruits, with added lemon juice, dried as a thin paste. Dried cherries if you can save enough from the birds — eat them like raisins — dried plums, that is, prunes, again very simple to dry, home dried grapes (otherwise known as sultanas, currants or raisins) ... could go on for pages, including all the dried fruits also used for chook feed, like dried persimmon and dried white mulberry and dried banana.

But to begin with, I'd go with apricots! Lots!
All the best, Jackie.

A Simple Home Drier

Place four to six tomato stakes in the ground in your hottest, driest, sunniest spot. Drape over fine bird mesh, or any wire mesh with mosquito netting over it. (Mossie netting can be washed after each batch). Cut fruit into slices, dip in lemon juice to stop it turning too brown too fast and lay out, not touching. Cover or take in before the dew falls each night or if it rains. But in very hot dry times you can risk leaving it out overnight, unless there are inquisitive possums or wallabies about. Fruit is dry when it bends rather than squishes. The longer you want to keep it though, the drier it needs to be. Store in a dark cool place.

Alfoil or reflective insulation spread under the wire will speed up drying. But do make sure air can easily circulate over and under the fruit. Wash the mossie netting in between each batch.

If flies and other insects are a problem, drape more mossie netting over the fruit. But it will soon develop a tough skin as it dries, so this usually isn't necessary.

PPS I'd also definitely grow lots of black and red currants. They make the most wonderful jam without sugar — gel all by themselves. It goes mouldy pretty quickly but it's also gobbled pretty quickly too. Not sweet — just very fruity! Much better than marmalade! And wonderful with meat (especially poultry and game).

Basic Cordial Recipe

2 cups lemon or lime juice
4 cups of berries, optional
6 cups sugar or equivalent other sweetener
2 tsp citric acid
2 tsp tartaric acid
4 cups water

Simmer berries in water if using till soft, and add to the following recipe. Otherwise bung it all in a pot and boil for ten minutes. If not using sugar keep small amounts in the fridge and freeze the rest in small plastic bottles till needed, for up to six months. If you are using sugar then it'll keep for several weeks, in a cool dark spot but not necessarily the fridge. Throw out if it bubbles, looks cloudy, grows fungi or in any other way changes looks, smell or makes gurgly noises.



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Ask the Wildlife Doctor

by Dr Barry Traill

Maleny, Queensland.



In this issue Dr Barry answers your queries about echidna family issues and marsupial mice, while a reader reports on a successful possum eviction method. If you have a query write to our resident wildlife expert Dr Barry Traill at Earth Garden, PO Box 2, Trentham Victoria 3458, or fax (03) 5424 1743 or email info@earthgarden.com.au.

Echidna infant care practice

Hi Barry,

My question is: can I use my huge straw bale without harming a baby echidna?

Echidnas used to come around at the end of winter each year and base themselves under the house for a month or so, sleeping in little dents in the ground (and having very enthusiastic sex). Then they move on until next year.

This year at least one hung around during all of winter (possibly earlier), sheltering in a tunnel pushed behind an oversized bale of straw under cover. In August, we started seeing up to three echidnas around that spot. Now there are just two regulars, who get up to all sorts of tricks including pushing a garbage bin in front of the entrance to the straw bale tunnel. Last week we saw a new burrow in the ground nearby, with an entrance about the size and shape of an echidna (and no rabbit droppings).

The entry in *Mammals of Victoria* says that when the bub gets prickly, it gets kicked out of the pouch and left safely in a burrow, where the mother visits it to feed it now and then, for six months. Can we assume that this burrow will be the one in the ground and not the tunnel under the straw? We'd really like to use the straw.

Regards, Liz, Clydesdale, Victoria.

Hi Liz,

Despite being very common echidnas lead hidden lives in many ways. The closest to reproduction that people may see, at least sometimes, are the 'Echidna trains', of two or more males desperately following a female in season, hoping to be the first in line for 'enthusiastic sex'. This can often degenerate into a mass of males using their most fearsome weapon against each other — *bumping*. If one gets bumped out of the line he wanders around angst-ridden with snout in the air, sniffing frantically. Because he can't see well he's trying to find the scent track of the female again so he can get back in line. But to your ques-

tion. The females in Victoria are probably fertilised in late winter, early spring, give birth two weeks later to their wee egg which they put directly into their pouch (which I've always thought was a deuced tricky procedure to evolve given echidnas are a prickly round animal with hands and feet which are basically small shovels). The egg hatches ten days after. Then the baby stays in the pouch sucking milk before it gets too prickly and gets dumped in a hole. After that mum comes and feeds it every few days until it starts becoming independent about six months after the egg laying. It's a very complex way to get a baby going.

So — if you add up that time then, yes, the baby echidna could be in the tunnel under your desired straw bale. I think it is much more likely that it is in the burrow away from the straw. The tunnel under the straw sounds like a temporary shelter, not a purpose-built breeding construction — but I can't be certain.

Sorry for the lack of a definitive answer, but maybe you can wait a few months before using the straw.

May your echidnas continue to hump 'enthusiastically' under your home for years to come!

Regards, Barry.

Marsupial mouse mystery

Hi Barry,

We contacted you last December about the headless python mystery, which I think you effectively solved with the dingo theory. Now we have the reappearing mice or should that be 'mouse' mystery. We have a very efficient worm farm in which we found a tiny marsupial mouse so, as it is close to the house, we re-located it about 500 metres across three gullies. The next day, the same, and the one after that. Our question is, did we re-locate three mice or the same one three times? What would be an effective re-location distance? How far do they travel to return to a wonderful source of food? Looking forward to your reply. Cheers, Sandra and Ross.

Hi Sandra and Ross,

Yesterday I caught a gorgeous little whip snake from a friend's back porch where it was at risk from being cuddled by their two-year old. I moved it several hundred metres away to a new home down the creek free of pesky toddlers. However, my friends showed commendable concern for it in asking whether it wouldn't use its homing powers to come straight back to be at risk from the children again (well, truth be told, they seemed a little more concerned about the children than the snake but hey, they'll come round).

Despite hearing regular stories of homing snakes, I'm pretty certain that the wee snake wouldn't have the brain power or interest in homing in on the toddler on the back porch again, but for animals of bigger brains and bigger home ranges I'm just not that certain.

I think I'll have to give you the fudgey answer that some animals seem to home in well, some don't. The antechinus (marsupial mouse) could do that sort of distance in a reasonably short time. So.... maybe it is a homing mouse.

To check whether it's the same animal next time you could get some nail scissors and just clip a little bit of fur off somewhere on the body to make a little mark you could recognise.

However, that said, we do know from studies with possums at least that relocating mammals is extremely stressful for them, and that most die if they are taken well away from their home range. Many animals, especially birds and mammals, are strongly territorial against other individuals of the same species. If you take them away and drop them somewhere else they are usually in someone else's territory. This leads to fights and lots of stress for the intruder. They don't know where to hide, they don't know where to find food. Most of them die nasty deaths fairly quickly.

Now moving your antechinus a few hundred metres away isn't in the order of sending possums to hell several kilometres away, but it probably isn't ideal for the beast.

You can't put up a barrier on your worm farm in some way?
Hope this helps, Barry.

Possums see light

And following on from last issue on the often tricky wildlife problem of having a roof cavity beloved by pos-



When the baby is too prickly for the pouch it gets left safely in a burrow. Mum feeds it until it starts becoming independent. It's a complex way to get a baby going.

sums. Ken found the following worked:

Hello Barry,

Thank you for the copy of your reply about possums and my apologies for a late response. For interest, I despaired of fixing the problem easily but had to do "something". I fitted a couple of bright fluoro lights in the roof space, which has foil sarking under the tiles and aircon ducting here and there — all shiny and reflective. One light directed at the entry point so that in my mind they could go out, but be more or less blinded if they tried to return. Also, I sprayed a couple of litres of "Deter" repellent around the darker perimeter areas inside the roof.

I left the lights on continuously for three days and nights, then onto a timer switch for the hours of darkness. After two weeks and no sounds of possums for all that time the potential entry points at a roof junction were closed off with chicken wire. I then sprayed that area of the roof exterior with "Deter" repellent as an added safeguard.

I have heard possums transitting our roof, but no entries to this stage. I am happy that the lights plus the 'Deter' were the greatest asset in my moving them humanely.

Thank you for your assistance and guidance.
Regards, Ken.

WILDLIFE In My Life

All around Australia Earth Gardeners have fascinating interactions with wildlife so send us your favourite wildlife tale and share it with other readers. We'll send you a \$25 Good Life Book Club voucher when we publish your story.

Living in the bush

I came to live in this resort, exclusive and top notch, the prices keep the riff-raff out, but left enough for scotch indulgences at dusk, and dawn, and other times each day; you've no idea the trials I face, I don't think I can stay.

Those glossy brochures won my heart, the spa and lifts and trees, and being this close to the coast, you always get a breeze, but what those mongrels didn't show, and how was I to know? The dreadful noise that spoils my sleep and steals my inner glow.

Now I'm a greenie through and through, I just love country life, but birds that squawk at 5am, if I could get a knife, I'd slit their throats and laugh with glee. And there's the frightful frogs, their croaking starts at my bedtime, and wakes up all the dogs.

But worse by far are blasted bats, they come here every year, they screech all night, blood-curdling squeals, why must they visit here?

Those screams I hear throughout the night, they say they're barking owls, and roosters roam the golfing greens, I'll kill the flaming fowls. My city friends just think it's fun, they don't have birds down there, they see the bags beneath my eyes, but leave without a care.

So now I'm left without a car, the shops are far away, and buses are a joke round here: I'm calling it a day.

— Shirley Hotchkiss

During the last six years I've become very keen on the native bush here on the NSW Central Coast, and on protecting it. I've also been appreciating and learning about the wildlife, much of it over my fence as I back onto bushland. There's a creek there so I hear and see lots of waterbirds. Each day lately I've been hearing the bowerbird doing his courting rituals, and last spring the black swamphen nested and raised their chicks here.

I wrote this tongue-in-cheek poem last year during our campaign to prevent destruction of a rare bushland block in Woy Woy. The Development Application was for 42 up-market retirement villas, with the (surviving) bush being used to promote the exclusive setting for the villas. As a result of the developer's appeal to the NSW Land and Environment Court, that DA has been withdrawn, and a modified plan is underway. So the campaign continues.

The wildlife inspiring this poem comes from two sources. First, I've been keeping a bird/wildlife diary for over a year now, noting all the uncommon species. These include the endangered glossy black cockatoo, swift parrot, and grey-headed flying fox.



There are plenty of unknowns too. Early one morning as I rode my bike past the proposed development site in the dark, an eerie noise came from the middle of the block. It sounded like a steam train. I have no idea what it was and I wasn't going to take a closer look.

My second source of poetic wildlife inspiration is from my near-sleepless experience of spending a night in a cabin in a tropical Queensland rainforest many years ago.

Having just relocated a baby daddy-long-legs who'd set up camp in my cup, I sign off.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Hotchkiss, Woy Woy, NSW.

Dear Shirley,

Thanks so much for your thoughts. I live in a country town (Maleny) that has been fighting an appalling supermarket* right on the creek through town. The bastards smashed a series of active platypus burrows during the building. Hopefully no-one will shop there, though the damage has been done. We must keep fighting to stop the constant degradation of our coastal bushland.

*Thanks for the dead wildlife WOOLWORTHS! Please everyone don't shop there!

Confessions of a Weekend Hippy

– Summer 2005 –



On weekdays a mild-mannered corporate pillar, at weekends a vegie-growing tree-hugger, in this issue Liz experiments with light earth walls, communicates with echidnas, shares gardening tips and reflects on cultural barriers.

by Liz Ingham
Yarraville, Victoria.

Rich In

One of our favourite games here at the Rancho Relaxo is 'Rich In'. Anyone can play; all you have to do is take turns naming things you have in abundance, until everybody has won. It's early spring as I write, and we're rich in spinach, leeks, wildflowers, frog song, seedlings, almond blossom, clean air and home brew.

Guided by mud

When you are interested in mud, people tell you things. They say mud will teach you how to work with it. They say to start on a very small building, which will teach you how to make a larger one. They tell you to feel the mud, play with it and be guided by it. Oh, I love that sort of talk.

We started with test bricks, which are sitting around near the shed, partly to gauge their weathering ability, and partly because they look cool. They say to the visitor "Yes, this is an ugly prefabricated shed, rotted out by termites and leaning gently on a pile of assorted building materials. But behold, here are mudbricks! One day this shed will dissolve and the Earth will rise up and create a new shed."

That was perhaps an unnecessary insight into the workings of my mind. If you want an insight into Trevor's mind, all you need to know is that each mudbrick is individually numbered, to correspond with careful notes of dates and mudbrick recipes in a special folder.

Meanwhile, when we weren't expecting it, the mud

started teaching us. One weekend, we dug out some fruit trees that were struggling after only a year in a mixture of our clay soil and compost. It took a pickaxe to break up the clods (lesson: clay + fibre = mudbrick). Then there are my seed-balls, still shiny and weather resistant after two years (lesson: clay + fibre = mudbrick). Then there are the swallows, flying between the dam's edge and their little shelf, building free-form adobe nest walls with their beaks (lesson: now that's just showing off, isn't it?).

Taking heart from our clay's willingness to create mudbricks whether we want to or not, we're having a go at making 'light earth' walls for a little shed.

It's simple...each mud brick has a number, they correspond to folders in the filing cabinets which correlate to the items on the PC which have been saved onto the laptop with individual CDs filed here...

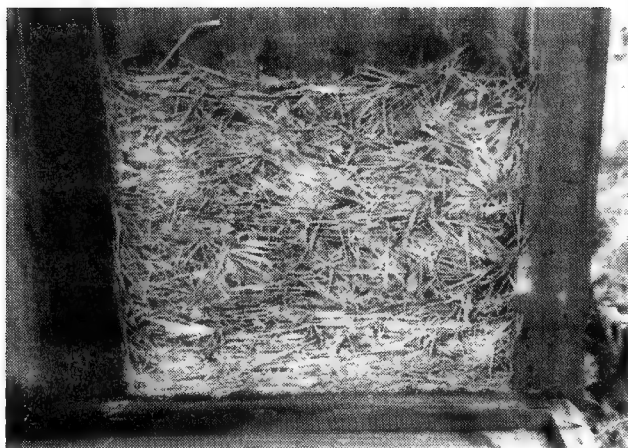


Light earth walls

Light earth is made from straw (or other light fibrous materials) thinly coated in a clay-rich mud slurry and squashed between formwork. The idea is to create lightweight infill walls. They're muddier than strawbale and lighter than mudbrick. The large quantity of bulk material minimises shrinking and cracking as it dries. The dried walls require a covering of render, but should provide a good surface for render to stick to.

Anyhow, that's the theory. We're only just starting out, so I can't say yet if it works, but so far, so good. The wall segment in the photo may look delicate, but it passes the precisely calibrated kick-it-hard test. Good old clay!

I can't wait to try my hand at render. I'm planning to incorporate steaming fresh cow poo into the top coat, partly because the finely processed grass is said to add strength and prevent cracking, and partly because the concept is irresistible.



Light earth walls. Straw coated with a mud slurry is squashed between formwork to create lightweight infill walls.

Echidnas

The main setback I've had is that echidnas have moved in beneath a huge bale of certified biodynamic barley straw I stockpiled for the walls (see page 44). We were formerly rich in biodynamic barley straw, and now we are rich in echidnas. The echidnas are rich in straw bale housing: everyone wins.

If you ever need a good laugh, just watch an echidna walk out of a straw bale and wander off to flatten a swathe of chocolate lilies on its way for a drink at the dam. There's something about the rolling, swaying, purposeful rhythm of their walk, and their complete disregard for obstacles, that makes me double up in hysterics. I can't explain it; it's something to do with having them spend half a day hiding from me by burying their faces under bits of tin with their great spiky bums sticking out ("If I can't see you, I must be invisible!"), then practically walking over my feet when they decide to take a stroll! Cracks me up, every time.

I really, truly hope the female echidna sticks around to raise a little spiky baby. That would be riches beyond my wildest dreams.



"If I can't see you, I must be invisible!" Echidnas practically walk over Liz's feet when they decide to take a stroll!

Tomatoes

As a weekend-only vegie gardener, I've found a few timesaving techniques that are worth passing on. One of them is to take your tomato trellis and turn it on its side so it sits horizontally above knee height. Then add another horizontal trellis a few feet higher. We use old trench mesh tied to star pickets.

It's a bit industrial, but it works. Each weekend I spend a few minutes poking any stray vines through the trellis, but they mostly just grow upwards through it of their own accord when we're not here. No tying, no snipping off leaders. The fruit gets supported as it ripens, and you just peer through the mass of leaves for any signs of red. Lately I've taken to using a single layer of horizontal trellis for capsicums and eggplants, so the heavy fruit can hang below the mesh off the ground, without staking.

A bonus is that it forms a solid block of foliage to shade the soil, and makes good shelter for any southern brown tree frogs in the neighbourhood.



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A bit industrial, but it works. Use a single layer of horizontal trellis for capsicums and eggplants, so the fruit hangs off the ground: no staking.

Culture

Going back to the city after the weekend is like going through the looking glass with Alice. I don't want to shock anyone, but they have people there who are untouched by mud, drink out of polystyrene and walk around with tiny little pointy things under their shoe heels. Each of us views the other as weird and, interestingly, each of us thinks the other has a narrow world view. They see me as being compelled to toil for my food for two days a week, which is funny, because that's exactly how I feel about the other five days. They see organic food as sort of dirty, and pesticides as keeping their food clean of yucky old insects.

I knew something had changed the day I was in one of those shops that sells herbal shampoo and dolphin-

shaped objects and I spotted some 'moth sachets'. I got all excited and asked the salesperson what sort of moths they attract. She looked at me like I was a freak, and I looked back, across a complete cultural barrier that had suddenly materialised. Each weekend that barrier gets higher, and I can see the day coming when I won't want to cross it any more. But until then, I continue my weekday anthropological studies, and savour the freedom of being a weekend hippy.

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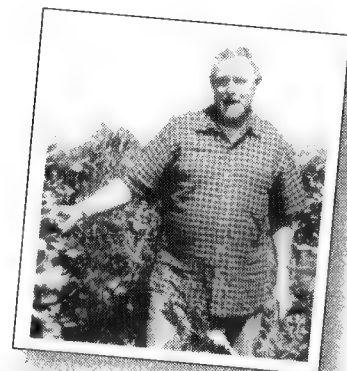
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Uncommon Fruits & Vegies

Founding editor of *Earth Garden*, Keith Smith, continues his regular column about the history — and how to grow — fascinating fruit and vegetables you won't always find at your supermarket.



FAIRE WORDS BUTTER NOE PARSNIPS

by Keith Smith
Artarmon, NSW.

THE curious saying that 'Fair (or fine) words butter no parsnips' originated more than 400 years ago in Britain, when buttered parsnip was a common dish. It has since been adapted by many writers, but the original meaning is clear enough: don't judge people by their flattering words, but by their deeds.

It must have been a familiar proverb to the apothecary John Parkinson, who wrote in his *Paradisus or Garden of Pleasant Flowers* (London, 1629): 'The Parsnep root is a great nourisher, and is much used in the time of Lent, being boyled and stewed with butter ... yet it is very good all winter long.'

Forget the fair words. If you plant fresh parsley seed this coming autumn, you could be sitting by the fireside next winter enjoying a plate of delicious buttered parsnips. Or you might prefer parsnip fritters in a batter of egg and breadcrumbs, parsnips (with optional potato and pumpkin) baked with a leg of lamb or beef, or osso buco served on a mash of (buttered) parsnips or mashed mixed potatoes and parsnips or carrots and parsnips. Parsnips add a subtle but definite sweet, nutty flavour to soups and stews. All winter long.

These roots are indeed great nourishers, because they contain more sugar than sugar beet, plus vitamins C, E and B3 (niacin), potassium and plenty of fibre.

The parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) is a root vegetable belonging to the carrot (*Apiaceae*) family. They are native to Europe, where plants still grow wild on chalky soil near

the sea. Parsnips are called *panais* in French.

Stringy, woody and sour primitive parsnips were eaten by the ancient Greeks and Romans, but the soft, fleshy, long, swollen and tapering taproot was not developed until the Middle Ages. Parsnips were the most important vegetable throughout Europe before the introduction of the potato from South America.

Parsnips left in the ground over winter taste all the better, because the sweetness develops after they have been exposed to cold and frost.

Growing

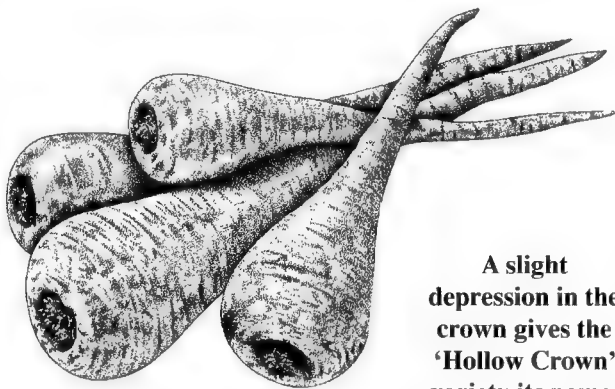
Like carrots, parsnips are cold hardy biennials, which produce umbels of yellow flowers in late summer, but, like carrots, they are grown as an annual.

Parsnips succeed best in cool temperate areas. They should be planted in deep, well-drained soil, enriched with manure from a previous crop, with the addition of some lime or dolomite. Fresh manure is bad for any root crop, and causes forked roots in parsnips.

Parsnip seed is thin and flat and quickly loses its vitality. Seeds must be sown fresh each season and often take three weeks to sprout. To speed germination, soak seeds in water overnight before planting.

Sow seeds in early spring, scattering thickly. Plant in rows 38 to 45 centimetres apart and thin out when about five to seven centimetres high to allow 15 to 20 centimetres between plants. Cover with a shallow layer of fine soil and water well.

Richard Gardiner, the Shrewsbury seedsman and market gardener whose *Profitable Instructions* (1603) was the earliest English printed vegetable gardening manual, liked to plant his parsnips in 'rigols' or circles, thinning out



A slight depression in the crown gives the 'Hollow Crown' variety its name.

the seedlings to five centimetres apart.

To obtain smooth roots in harder ground, use a dibber or crowbar to make a deep hole, fill it with fine rich soil and sow a few seeds on top. Thin to the strongest plant.

Feed plants occasionally with a weak diluted mixture of liquid manure. Hoe to keep down weeds.

Roots are ready to lift the following winter. They can be stored in the ground until you need them, or lift, clean and pack roots into a box of sand or store them in a cellar.

Leave one or two plants to flower and ripen fresh seed for next year's crop. Seed more than one year old seldom germinates.

Varieties

'Hollow Crown' ('Champion Hollow Crown'; 'Hollow Crowned'). For 160 years 'Hollow Crown' has been the best and most popular variety of parsnip grown

in Australian gardens.

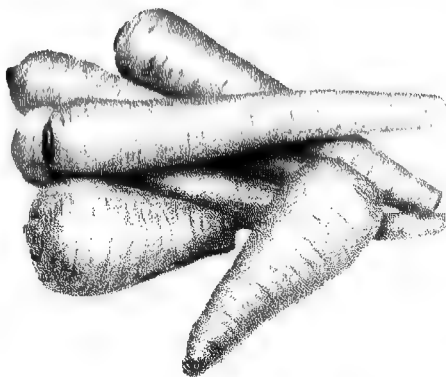
Roots are long, smooth and white, tender and sweet. In deep, loose soil, they might reach 30 centimetres or more in length and five to ten centimetres in diameter at the top. A slight depression in the crown gives the variety its name.

'Improved Hollow Crown' matures sooner than the common kind.

'The Student', developed at Cirencester Agricultural College in England in the mid-nineteenth century, has clean, smooth roots and a more subtle flavour than 'Hollow Crown'.

'Guernsey' ('Large Guernsey'; 'Jersey'; 'Improved Half Long') is a standard variety more than 100 years old. Roots are larger at the top and might reach 90 centimetres to one metre in length, but still have good quality and flavour. Use when boiled as feed for cattle or fowls.

'Siam' ('*Panais de Siam*'). A rare variety from Thailand which has a small yellowish root with a tender, rich flavour.



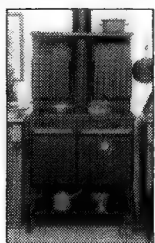
Parsnips left in the ground over winter taste all the better, because the sweetness develops after they have been exposed to cold and frost.

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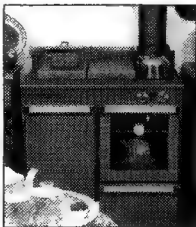
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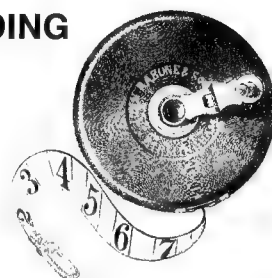
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Robust solar showers

Hi Bob,

My wife and I live in an isolated area and are in the habit of having our showers outside in the warmer months. An outside shower really makes you feel cleaner, because you are not in a steamy room. It also reduces the rate at which mould accumulates in your bathroom. We have been using camp showers, which are basically a plastic bag, with one side black, that you leave out in the sun to warm up and then hang up to have your shower. These are not very durable; the water inlet is plastic and distorts readily, which

makes it leak water when you lay it down in the sun to warm up. The nozzles are cheap plastic and tend to break easily and the showers are made in such a way that they cannot adequately support the weight of the water when they are anywhere near full (about 20 litres). We were wondering if you, or anyone else, had a design for a solar shower that is robust and can be put together by someone that Careers Guidance testing found to be of 'below average mechanical aptitude'. Camp showers cost anywhere from ten to thirty dollars, commercially available solar hot water units cost thousands of dollars; there ought to be something in between that will do the job without costing the earth!

Regards. Paul & Irene.

Dear Paul,

What a delightful question!

Once upon a time, the bucket shower was the standard in outback luxury. A tin bucket was filled with hot water. The basic model simply had holes punched in the bottom. You hoisted it up with a rope as quickly as possible and got under it until the bucket emptied.

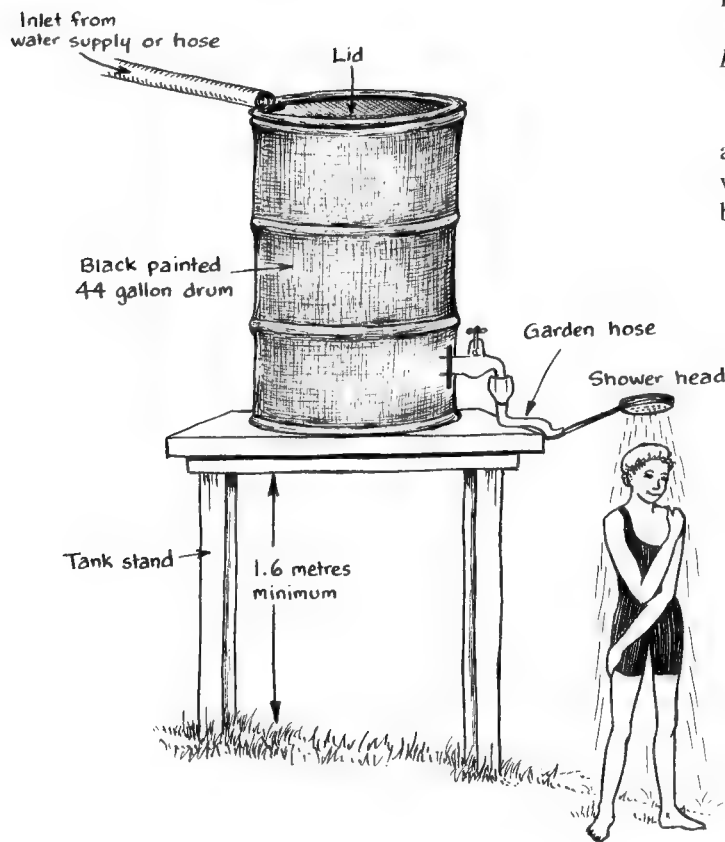
The luxury model was fitted with a garden tap in the side near the bottom, with a string wound around it. You pulled the full bucket up; a tug on the string opened the tap, and of course it was then up to you how the water was delivered.

Naturally, the old timers didn't know about solar water heating. To achieve that, all you'd need would be a lid to minimise heat loss through evaporation, and black paint on the outside.

I don't know what pressure your water supply has. If it is sufficient, you could mount a 44-gallon (200 litre) tank on a suitable stand and have that much hot water by about noon. If 200 litres is too much to get to showering temperature, you could half-fill the drum.

Fitting a tap to a bucket or drum is not that difficult: even I have done it. I cut a hole in the side of the drum so that the threaded back part of the tap just squeezed in. I cut an oversized washer from an old car tube. I pushed the tap in and climbed into the drum.

Of course, I managed to push the tap out, so had to climb out again. Having a second person there would have been helpful, but as my wife tells me all



In hot climates an outdoor shower needn't be a complex device.

the time, I don't know how to ask for help.

Back in again.

I put the car tube washer onto the thread of the tap, and then wound a flat nut onto it, and tightened it with a wrench.

You could attach a garden hose to the tap, with another tap or other closing device at the shower end.

The only problem with the drum might be on a windy day: the wind may steal the heat from the water. This is one of the reasons conventional solar water heaters have a glass front. If you wanted to increase efficiency, you could construct a light box frame around it, and tack onto this the kind of clear plastic they use for greenhouses. I believe this material is supposed to last about five years. Have fun,
Bob.

Earth wall thickness?

Dear Bob,

I have your books just brought from the library, and I have a quick question. I want to break the line up of the front of the house and would like to use, for a small section towards the end, a rammed earth or poured earth wall. I notice from neighbouring blocks there is shingle below ground though I haven't looked at the topsoil. My question is could I build the wall at 200 mm instead of 300? I realise I may compromise on other things, but I didn't want the wall too thick and thus encroach on the interior, as my desired house is on a steep-ish slope (falling away from the roadside). Also, I have seen some moulds of formwork with a pleasant bevel on the horizontal. Is this easily replicated?
Gianni.

Dear Gianni,

First, topsoil is no good for building. You need to go below it.

If you build a new section, will it be a habitable room? A 200 mm earth wall is not much thermal insulation. More of a problem is stability. If it is only 200 mm thick, it should not be too high or too long. The wall thickness needn't encroach on the interior space. Instead, the extra 100 mm can go outwards. I don't think there is much difference in the amount of work, or in visual impact.

I have not seen formwork like you mentioned. I've always made up my own, both for rammed earth and for formwork cob. You could attach some horizontal beading to the inside face of the formwork, but of course you'd have to be careful when taking the forms off.

I have made nice brick-like visual patterns just using a hammer and large screwdriver.
Have fun with your project,
Bob.

• **Bob Rich and Keith Smith are the co-authors of the newly-published owner builders' classic, *The Earth Garden Building Book*, which is available for \$49.95 plus postage from The Good Life Book Club (03) 5424 1814 or visit www.thegoodlifebookclub.com.**

Bob Rich has been writing for *Earth Garden* since 1980. During that time, he has kept his fire and idealism, and wants to lead you down the *Earth Garden* path towards a sustainable world where everyone gets a fair go. Look around his web sites www.mudsmith.net and www.bobswriting.com.

With *Earth Garden*'s founder Keith Smith, Bob is the author of the *Earth Garden Building Book: Design and buy your own house*. You can buy the **FOURTH edition from the Good Life Book Club. If you do, Bob can send you a uniquely signed bookplate to stick into the front (same if you have bought the book or one of its earlier editions anywhere). Send Bob a stamped, self-addressed envelope with an unused 50-cent stamp inside to cover stationery expenses, and he'll send you back the bookplate. His address is LPO Box 214, Healesville, Victoria, 3777.**

Anyone buying a copy of the *Earth Garden Building Book* qualifies for a second book written by Bob, free of charge. Only, this book is in electronic format, something Bob is keen on because e-books don't eat trees. The list of available titles is at www.bobswriting.com/bookbuy.html.

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Finding the Perfect Farm

In this issue Colin tells of his own experience on the land, his ten requirements for the perfect farm, and how wwoofing helps him get to know people and country.

by Colin Statham

Tweed Heads, New South Wales.

IN 1993, after selling my acreage, where I was a WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) host, I took to a very different lifestyle: that of sailing a yacht, 'grown' on my organic farm, along the east coast. I would remain a WWOOF host, and in any bad weather, I'd go wwoofing.

But after a time, one thing stood out: I was missing the farm life. The pleasures of the sailing life were becoming all too few, as the masses of boating people who like to get away from it all were creating the problems by taking them with them. Normally, there are not many safe anchorages along the eastern coastline, but to share them with 200 others is not my kind of a peaceful lifestyle. There are noisy jet skis, water skiers who start before daylight, generators going all night to run microwaves, and stereos at full blast that anyone within 100 metres has listen to. This happens mainly in the warmer months, from about mid-October, until the end of April, with school holidays being the worst.

So another change in my lifestyle had to happen, and is now an annual event. During most of this period I leave the yacht at a marina, and go travelling in Australia by land, wwoofing, naturally. This keeps me in touch with farm life and vegie growing, and after visiting many hosts (see stories in *Earth Garden* since March 2002) it became evident that I was subconsciously looking for land, to start again when things were just right. I found I was going wwoofing for longer periods, and that it would be some time before I would be ready to make any decisions. Many were the places I could have put down roots again, but I would get a no for some reason or other.

What was interesting is that I searched for what I wanted in an economical way. I didn't race across to, say, Tasmania, on a speculative trip, on the advice of an estate agent, or acquaintance, nor from reading adverts in magazines. Though I did read the adverts, and remember one: 'Land Wanted, Tasmania or North Queensland', suggesting to me that these people obviously hadn't any idea where they wanted to go.

If only they had gone wwoofing initially. They would have found out if the area would suit them, and saved them a lot of heartache, finance, and time, and learned a few skills needed for their new venture, whether the hot and humid north, the cooler south, or the hot, dry inland.

While I worked in the area I wanted to check out, I went to WWOOF host farms, working in the mornings,

and had the afternoons free. For this, I received good food, a bed, plenty of information from the hosts and locals who knew their area, and had a great time, making many friends. At many places I stayed a month, and by this method I found out a lot more about an area I was interested in. I got to know the area, warts and all.

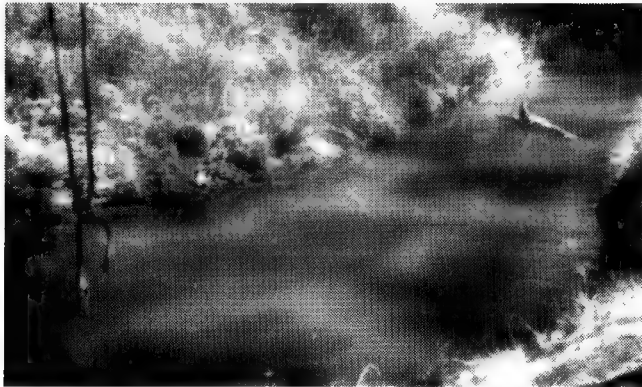
Did it have what I was interested in? Good growing soil? What was the climate like? Would the council allow me to do the things I wanted to do? Did it have water, and lots of other things? The 'where' I wanted the land, would jump at me when it was ready, when I had done the homework.

I've seen a lot of Australia, having been to the four extremities, and three times around. Cape York Peninsula was great: there was a large property on the Pascoe River selling shares; it sounded ideal, and wasn't far from the top end of the Great Barrier Reef, and I could have 20 acres, with deep river frontage. But unfortunately for me, only for sale to people who wanted to live there full time. I would want to go walkabout occasionally, before the Big Wet and the humidity.

The next trip was from Cairns to Darwin, via Chil-lagoe, the Mitchell, and Staten rivers, to Karumba, and on through the Gulf of Carpentaria, Westmoreland, the Roper River, to Borrooloola and on to the edge of Arnhem Land. This was exciting travelling. At some river crossings, I had to wait until the tide went down to cross the crocodile-infested rivers with the vehicle, over a corduroy, sapling-based track, so as not to sink into the soft sand. On then to Darwin. But again, the humidity!

The Tanami desert was the area I'd always wanted to see, on the Alice Springs to Halls Creek track, with Wolf Creek Meteorite Crater as a big bonus. The Crater is one kilometre wide, a circular depression in the earth, with a wall of shattered, eroded crust. It is as high as 35 metres, and gave me an eerie feeling walking inside. Exploring further, to Wyndham, the Gibb River road to the Kimberley. Magic country to visit. Broome, and the west coast, Perth, to Margaret River in the south: great country.

One of my special trips was through the Simpson Desert, from Mt Dare Station, Purnie Bore, the French track, to Poepels peg, where Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory meet, and on to Birdsville. Exciting country, but no water or decent soil for my hobby. There were some really good areas, good people, good vibrations, but Australia is such a land of extremes, and contrasts, that I had made a list of ten conditions any future acreage would have to come close to before I would consider it was ready for me.



Colin skinnydipping in Eulah Creek, Narrabri.



Harvest time, two days before being eaten by mice.

Ten qualities of the perfect farm

These ten conditions are the backbone of any dream place we all think about; they are ideal for most places, and are only commonsense when all boiled down.

1. There must be water. If water is not there, walk away! All else can be made, grown, recycled or brought in. Put in as many water tanks as you can afford against the droughts that will come. Make sure the ground underneath the tanks has been levelled, and that 100 mm of river sand is placed on top of the last levelling. Place the tanks in an elevated position, so that all areas, gardens, stock troughs, and even the kitchen sink can get water by gravitation.
2. Ease of access. Some of the places offered for sale I've seen needed a 4WD to get in, or costly road building.
3. Is work available in the area?
4. Is there a market for fresh vegetables?
5. Is the intended building site north facing? If in shade it gets cold in winter, or in full sun, hot in summer.
6. Fences. A good boundary and internal fences are essential. If not, they are costly to build.
7. What facilities are there? Are electrical power, medical treatment or shopping needed, and are they available?
8. Soil condition. Explore, feel the texture. Is it friable? Smell it: does it have any worms or microbes? Is it clay or sandy loam?
9. Beware of any guarded response the owners make as to

why they are selling. Don't buy their mistakes.

10. Neighbours. What are they into? Are they working their farm commercially, using chemicals? Their spray will drift. Is the land council-approved? Do read the fine print. Don't rely on the conveyancer. It is interesting why I say "don't rely on the conveyancer".

I bought a 16-acre 'farm' really cheap; no-one wanted it after five years trying to sell. It had a creek, a bore, and level, fenced land, ideal for vegie growing. It had a 1923 railway carriage, all of timber, with a verandah on each end, with etched glass windows, and cedar fittings, done up to its original condition, with a shed built over it. It is one I'd pulled along on steam trains I used to drive. House plans were put to the council, but were rejected: I couldn't build in this shire unless the land was a minimum of 100 acres.

The solicitor acting for the transfer did not tell me this. The agent must have rung the owner saying I've got this mug from the city with cash, and all may have had a good laugh. Later, I read the fine print that said I had access to a local government tribunal if I wanted to change this. I did this independently, and paid the fee of \$20. After a month, the decision came in my favour. I could now build. Later the agent just happened to be passing, called in and said "Howyergoin".

I'd an idea he'd found out. I said "It's tough out here, and sometimes I think of selling. "Oh!", he said, and

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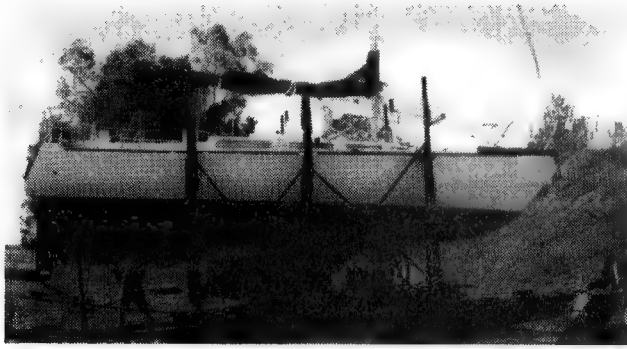
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Colin's pride and joy, 'grown' on his organic farm, for sailing along the east coast. In bad weather, he went wwoofing.

jumped straight in as I had planned, saying he could sell it for me. I asked what kind of figure. He said one nowhere near as high as I had worked out it would be now with permission to build a house, but a lot higher than the original purchase price, and I knew he knew I was no longer the mug from the city.

Water requirements

The subject of water is endless. It is the most important commodity when selecting any land, and a lot of homework has to be done. Get it wrong and the dream becomes a nightmare.

Is it surface or underground, and is it accessible? By law, some areas do not permit the taking of underground water. If it is taken, it has to be licensed. Is the property flood-free? Check if there are any debris, small sticks or any water-borne objects up in the trees. Can swales be made to direct the downhill rainwater flow around the contour of the land, to selected dams? Ask the neighbours if it is really a permanent creek, and keep an open mind on anyone who says it is. This is Australia, one of the driest continents on earth.

The scenario is ... it is springtime, you are out in the country, you've heard about this U beaut place from a friend. But remember, people only sell when their place is looking good, and while you are there everything is green. The "Oooh's" and "Aaah's" come easily, as you ponder the view. It really is a beautiful block, a sheltered patch of trees, "Ah! There's a wallaby!" Just the fact that you are standing on what could be your dream place causes you to go into raptures about the place.

Most potential buyers are looking at the place with an emotion called 'euphoria', and this must be kept strongly in check, as in three month's time the area can change to a totally different aspect.

It is then a lot of buyers wish they were elsewhere. I'll set a scene. My first acreage was 16 acres, with creek, fertile soil, and is still in the family after 24 years. And it too ... was springtime: yeeehaaaa! But before the ink was dry on the deeds, unbeknown to anyone, the drought that was to last for the next four long, hard years had started months earlier. (It was officially recorded from 1980 to 1984 in Western NSW.)

Hot dry winds, with temperatures in the mid-40s, but with no humidity. The creek disappeared first. I knew there was unlimited underground water, and this had been tested beforehand as I have no illusions about drought: they are a fact of life.

I installed two of the biggest concrete tanks available, storing 52,000 litres, immediately on purchase of the land, unaware that this impending natural occurrence, called drought, would last so long. Then I set up a pump at the bore to keep them full. The grass dried and blew away; the ground gradually cracked open in long stretches some 50 metres long, 10 cm wide and 30 cm deep, and it was dangerous to walk around in the dark.

Occasionally there were black clouds, some sprinkling showers, but none of the deluges that are needed to saturate. The hobby vegetable garden of five acres survived, owing to the five kilometres of drip irrigation, and with judicious watering from the bore that I'd worked out how to put in. And I'm proud, though humble, to say it was during this drought that I won 16 firsts and 16 second prizes out of 32 entries for vegetables at the local shows. I was beaten for a first for the biggest pumpkin, by 148 grams. My proud granddaughter got first prize; I got the second.

The parched part of the block I had to let go had just given a crop of 500 Queensland Blue pumpkins, all ready for selling. Then came the mouse plague. No warning, nothing to indicate their presence before dark the previous night. But during the early hours I awoke to this scuffling noise, and saw them everywhere, and I mean everywhere!

They were even boiling in the electric jug. I had turned it on and was just about to pour a cuppa! And the smell of singed mouse when the electric toaster was turned on was really obnoxious. But back to the pumpkins: the mice were not content to attack one pumpkin until it was finished, then start on another one, they attacked all of them, and made them unsaleable. The smell of rotting pumpkins is comparable to footrot in sheep.

The mice left after about two months; again not a sign where they went. Eventually it did rain, and the land recovered well. During the drought, all the cracks in the soil had filled with windblown debris, including all available grass seeds from the block. This held, and protected them for the four years, and when they eventually got wet they all came up in these unusual rows in the cracks. Nature had protected the future of the species.

It took a few months for the creek to recover and run again. I was privileged to watch the first flow as it meandered slowly, pushing leaves, sticks, and the frothy, muddy, topsoil-laden water in its path, over the parched sandy creek bed, soaking up all it could get. It also replenished the bore, and the cycle of life began again.

• Wwoofing is a cheap and cheerful way to see Australia. Many people also use it to try an area or way of life before plunging in. Whether as a wwoofer or a host, give it a go. Contact: WWOOF Australia, W Tree, Buchan, Victoria, 3885, phone (03) 5155 0218.

in praise of spuds

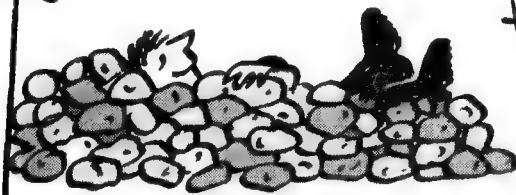
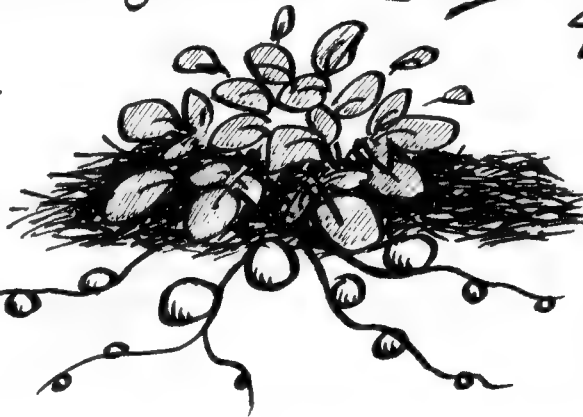


they hide their
light under a
bushel
(of thick mulch)

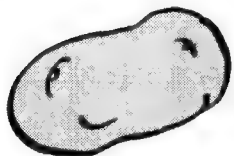
Solanum tuberosum is deliciousus
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then for the next three
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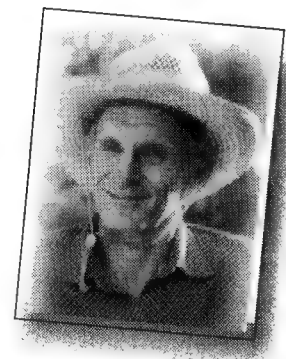


we're innocent!

Jill Redmond

Permaculture

in Hindsight



After 25 years of permaculture in Australia, its various practitioners have produced all kinds of useful innovations. In this issue, Bruce reflects on the importance of design in permaculture, and describes some ingenious examples.

by Bruce Hedge
Newham, Victoria.

WHAT is the first word that springs to mind when the word 'permaculture' is mentioned? Food? Growing? Organic gardening? For me, it is 'design'. To me, the intelligent use of materials, spaces, climate, plants and animals, to create an ongoing, ever-expanding productive system, is the essence of permaculture. And it all boils down to design.

I get to see many different properties in the course of my work, and I occasionally find gems of ideas that are worth sharing with readers. Scott and Amanda live in a beautiful octagonal mudbrick extension to an existing conventional residence near Kangaroo Ground in Victoria. Their electricity comes from a bank of five PV panels arranged on an ingenious simple frame facing north. Scott has devised a simple rig to tilt the panels up and down as the sun climbs higher in the sky towards summer. The efficiency increase can be quite substantial, but not as great, Scott finds, as keeping the surface clean of bird poo, which can cut the output quite dramatically. It appears that birds liked to perch on the top peak of the panels, and do their fertilising thing, and this necessitated regular tedious

cleaning of the panels to keep the electricity output flowing. So a quite ingenious solution came to pass.

A series of jagged aluminium teeth were installed along the peak of the panels, and the result was no more bird perching! A lovely design and much increased efficiency of the panels. The photo tells the story.

Another ingenious use of materials, which incorporates recycling, is shown in the next photo. Most of us have an old tank that has rusted out lying around the place. Half an hour with an angle grinder and some judicious bending and bolting can make a multitude of shelters for animals or wood, or even the odd tender lemon tree in cool climates!

After 27 years in this 'interesting' climate, I'm about to risk a Meyer lemon tree in the shelter to the north of three very large tagasaste trees, in soil which has been extraordinarily enriched by the continuous drop of leaves over the years. I had to mow one-metre-high lush, green grass underneath them to clear a place to plant! The nitrogen levels in the soil must have risen too, since the tagasaste ('tree lucerne') is a legume. I'll keep you posted!

The tank halves remind me a lot of my chook dome — another wonderful bit of permacultural design.



Inset: this handy bird deterrent released Scott and Amanda from regular tedious cleaning of their solar panels in order to keep the current flowing efficiently.

Left: Scott devised a simple rig to tilt the panels up and down as the sun climbs higher in the sky towards summer.



Above: half an hour with an angle grinder can result in shelters for animals or firewood, or even the odd tender lemon tree in cool climates!

Right: the chook dome — a wonderful bit of permacultural design — can be moved to a new spot every few days to allow the chooks a fresh area to forage.



The framework is made from inch diameter electrical conduit and covered with galvanized chicken wire. It can be moved to a new spot every few days to allow the chooks a fresh area to forage. I originally saw the idea for such a dome in Linda Woodrow's book *The Permaculture Home Garden*, published in 1996. Two wonderful German engineering student wwoofers spent a whole day making this masterpiece (I think they were quite chuffed to have a project they could get their teeth into) and it has worked wonderfully for the past three years. Two reservations, however: it is actually quite heavy to move, and if you want to move it any distance, it takes at least three people to shift it. Also, in our climate, a separate movable roosting box is provided within the dome, otherwise I'm sure the poor chooks would freeze, even though half is covered with a tarpaulin. My two non-laying, geriatric Isa Browns, who should have gone to compost years ago, scratch around and make areas for vegetable patches, but I'm not sure I'll continue with chooks after they recycle themselves. The dome made a terrific cage for a favourite apple tree last year during the fruit season, and we harvested a huge crop of apples untouched by our annual avian attackers.

Just a little aside. I had lent my copy of Linda's book to someone a couple of years ago, and I couldn't remember who, and I couldn't remember the title of the book, or Linda's surname, so I got on the internet and googled 'chook dome' under 'pages from Australia', and up came the answer!! WOW!! Not 'chicken dome', not 'poultry cage', but 'chook dome'. What an absolutely amazing tool that search engine is!

When Alice and I visited Rick and Naomi Coleman's place last year, we were taken by the huge amount of mulch they were able to grow and use from their land. Last winter I asked a wwoofer to make me a comfrey patch in a spot that could use our greywater to grow masses of rich leaves for easy harvesting mulch. The results in early October are very encouraging. A patch of about 30 square metres is flourishing, and will be cut as needed. It's also an easy and valuable job for wwoofers to do in summer.

If any of you are particularly proud of a well designed piece of your paradise, share it with us. Email bahedge@bigpond.com.au.

I'm off to plant some potatoes.

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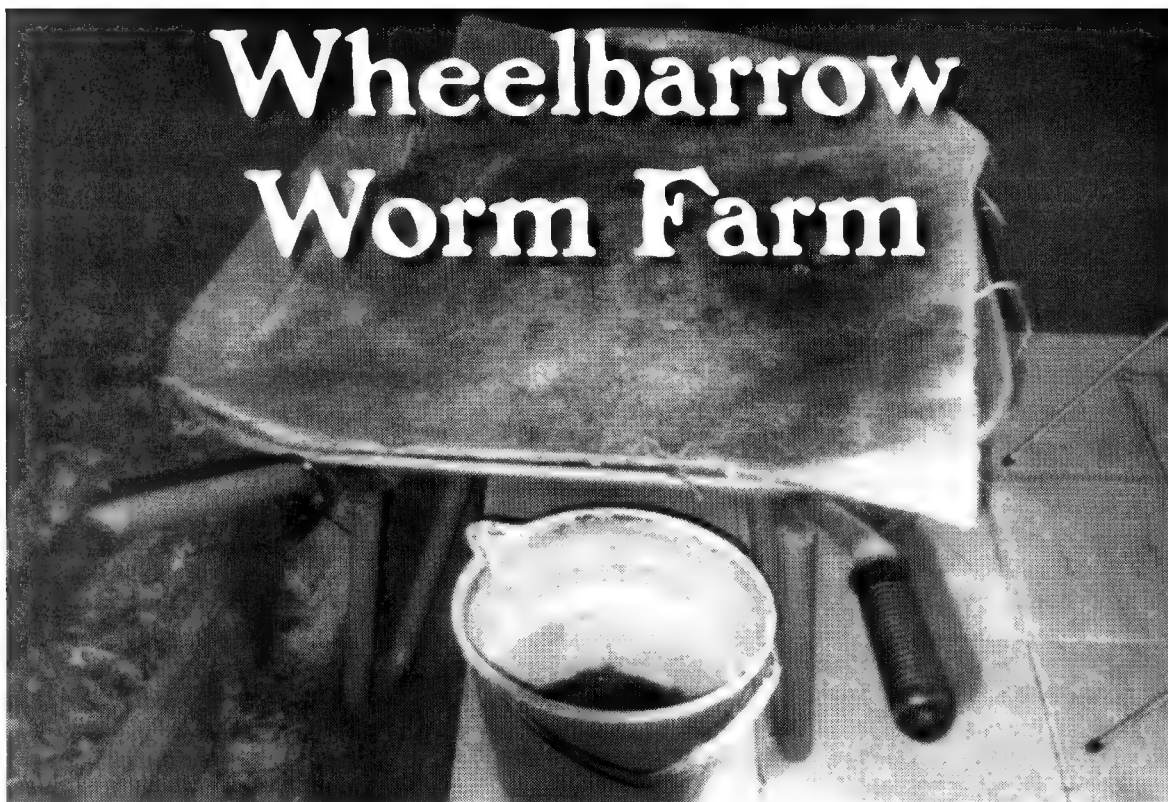
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Worms need a dark, damp cool environment and food to thrive. To start the worms off, you will need some shredded newspaper and a little soil to get them going.

by Val Harris

Albany, Western Australia.

A TRIP to your local hardware store or gardening centre to look at worm farms could lead to serious heart palpitations when you look at the price. Luckily for us all there are cheaper alternatives that work well, and will produce the 'black gold' of worm castings and 'worm tea', or 'worm juice' that will make your garden spectacular.

If you scan your local paper you will find suppliers of Tiger worms, the preferred species for home composting. For a very small outlay you can get enough to furnish your worm farm.

Worms need a dark, damp cool environment and food, and then they will thrive. If you have an old wheelbarrow that may be too holey to use in the garden, it can be transformed in to a fully functioning worm farm with very little effort.

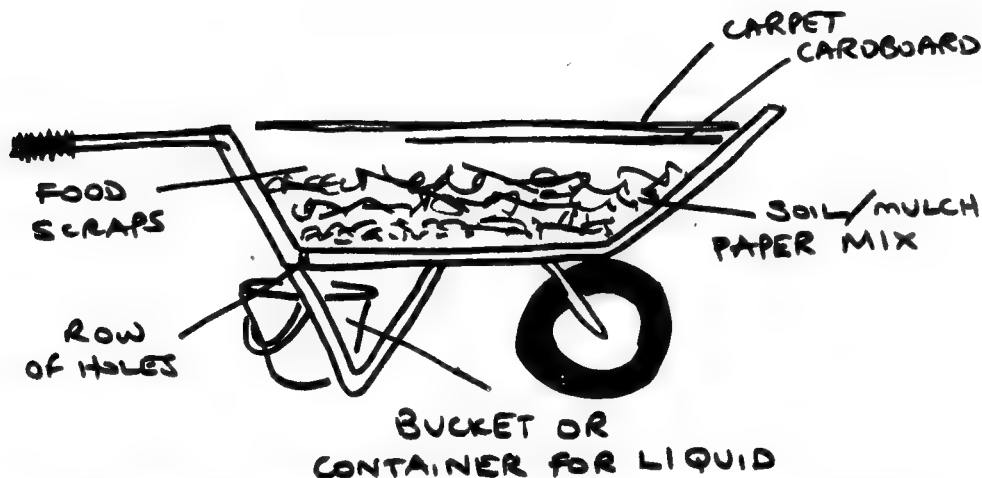
If the rust holes in the barrow are big enough to allow soil to fall through, then some leftover shade cloth, plasticised or plain, can be cut to fit the bottom of the barrow to keep the castings from leaking. At the lowest point of the barrow, between the handles, drill four or five holes in a row. This is to allow the 'worm tea' fluids to drip out into

a bucket that you will place under these holes when your barrow is in position.

To start the worms off, you will need some shredded newspaper and a little soil to get them going. Layer this to just below the top of the barrow. Add your worms and a few food scraps to get the process started. A piece or two of old carpet on the top, with a piece of cardboard to act as a rain shield in very wet weather to prevent the worms from drowning, is all you need. They need well-drained soil, and can drown if the soil is too soggy. Place the barrow in a spot that gets more shade than sun, so the worms won't cook or dry out, and that's it. All they need now is a regular feed. In very hot weather a light sprinkling of water to maintain a moist environment may be necessary.

Worms are great little eaters and will enjoy kitchen scraps such as vegetable peelings (no citrus or onions), teabags, coffee grounds and filters, paper serviettes, bread, stale biscuits, soaked and shredded pizza boxes, shredded paper and envelopes (non-glossy), leaves, egg shells, and even hair from your hairbrush!! Don't put too much organic matter in at a time, because if there is more than they can eat it will simply rot and smell and you will not get a good result. Small regular amounts are best.

I invested \$20 in a paper shredder from a big department store, that fits over a wastepaper bin and shreds five sheets of paper at a time. All non-glossy junk mail now



As long as the basics are right, worm farms can be successful in polystyrene boxes, old tyres, a baby's bath or even an old wheelbarrow.

goes to a far better use than landfill, and I particularly relish shredding the political 'bumpf' that seems to be in endless supply, and putting it where it will do some good.

The 'worm juice' is fantastic for fruit and vegies, and my roses like the monthly feed I give them of a handful of the worm castings (carefully cleared of worms, of course!) stirred into a bucket of water, applied to the root area. My fishing friends swear that the worms make good bait, but I

haven't the heart to use mine for fishing.

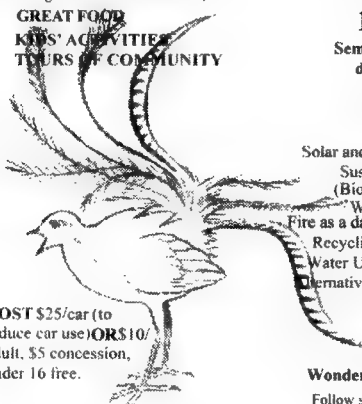
In the past I have had successful worm farms in polystyrene broccoli boxes, a stack of old tyres and a plastic baby bath. As long as the basic principles of care are followed, your imagination and whatever materials you have to hand can lead to a long and happy working arrangement with your very own compost factory. Whether in town or country you can be a productive farmer!

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Create a Tropical Treasure

It's one thing to create a beautiful and productive permaculture garden in temperate Australia, but quite another in the harsh conditions of somewhere like Kununurra. But with permaculture concepts, observation, trial and error and patience, Birgit found a way.

by Birgit Bradtke

Kununurra, Western Australia.

THE WORD 'tropical' seems to be inevitably connected with 'paradise'. Palm-fringed beaches come to mind, coconuts, mangoes and pineapple, hibiscus flowers and eternal sunshine. Alas, when I first arrived in Australia I discovered, and fell hopelessly in love with, a very different kind of tropical paradise.

Kununurra in remote, northern WA is famous for the rugged beauty of the surrounding Kimberley with its countless gorges and waterfalls. A harsh and unforgiving climate has created a wild country that is appealing to photographers, but it presents a big challenge to the gardener.

The dry season here is beautiful (except for the dehydrating easterly winds) but from October onwards plants have to deal with scorching heat (try 63 days in a row above 40°C), together with unbearable humidity (110 per cent or so, I'm sure). The sun bakes the ground and kills soil life. It burns up organic matter and nutrients in the soil and it burns leaves. During the wet season violent storms knock everything around, and torrential rains leach any nutrients out of soil that is poor to start with, devoid of organic matter and deficient in everything. And wait until you see the size of our termites!

Shortly after moving here a flat-mate introduced me to permaculture. I was instantly hooked. The concept of it made so much sense. What appealed even more was the idea of letting nature do the work whilst I sit back and relax, waiting for all the wonderful fresh food to materialise.

Well, it was a bit of a learning curve. But after six years of trial and error I think I've finally got it right. I would like to share with you the techniques that worked for me in the end: one acre of my recently acquired virgin bush land (read: sandy, sunbaked, leached and termite eaten) has, in less than two years, been transformed into a lush and productive oasis where wildlife abounds and you can always find something to turn into dinner.

If you live in the tropics and the advice in your gardening books and magazines hasn't worked for you so far (since it is hardly ever relevant to our latitudes) then give my simple strategies a go.

The first important point is to never leave the ground bare. Mulch it and grow something, anything that is willing to grow there, the more the better. You can always thin it when space is needed. Encourage what grows. Chop and drop it on the ground as mulch. Add any other organic materials that you can get your hands on.

Every time I start a new garden bed I first mark it with logs. (They are plentiful on my property; remember the termites?). They break down over time and provide nutrients, and after every storm there are many more lying around to replace them.

I install the irrigation and then throw on a mixture of the following: weeds, shredded paper from the office, leaves raked from the path, branches that had to be pruned, spent plants out of

other beds, garden waste that neighbours were about to take to the tip (yes, they think I'm a bit weird), litter out of the chook dome if I happen to move it (otherwise I add a good sprinkle of dynamic lifter instead), and so on. Only when the ground is thickly covered do I plant.



Birgit among the bananas, which are doing well in a thicket of cannas and heliconias.

The second important point is to start by growing only plants that love the climate and can make do with what little the soil has to offer at this stage. Select plants according to their vigour and hardiness in your conditions rather than your personal preference or culinary desires. Save yourself a lot of work and heartbreak by adding your favourites later, when your soil has improved.

If I use chook pen litter a lot of the seeds in it germinate straight away. If not I sprinkle around seeds of basil (any kind), salad mallow, amaranth, birds eye chillies and snake beans. They grow anywhere, the chooks like them and they seed freely, so there is always seed at hand. (The bowerbirds and honeyeaters plant the cherry tomatoes and pawpaws.)

Next I plant some seeds of pigeon pea and/or crotolaria. Both are legumes, but pigeon pea needs inoculant (use the same as for lablab) whereas crotolaria utilises a rhizobium native to our soils. Pigeon pea is edible (makes yummy dhal!) and crotolaria is not. Both quickly grow into two to three-metre shrubs that offer wind protection and shade and are prolific mulch producers (just chop and drop). They flower and seed only late in the dry season, so there is no danger of them becoming weeds in the bush. They are both loved by termites and are often short lived, but as they die their root nodules release nitrogen to feed others, and their skeletons still serve as trellises.



Beds in the new kitchen garden have been marked out and partly mulched and planted.

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If the area includes a site for a fruit tree then the tree goes in now, together with plenty of compost, and a couple of handfuls of dynamic lifter sprinkled around the base. During the wet season I fling a few sweet potato cuttings towards it, in the dry season I go to the trouble of walking over and sticking them under the mulch. Trees that will cope are mangoes, Barbados cherries, guavas, mulberries and, though not growing on trees, pineapples need mentioning here, too.

If there is a strong wattle I plant a passionfruit vine under it (yellow varieties are particularly hardy). Passionfruit love growing up wattles, which are legumes. As the tree becomes shaded by the vine it drops its leaves and its root system sheds nitrogen-releasing nodules.

Good plants to grow on the edges of a new bed are garlic chives, and at the back and the sides lemon-grass, canna lilies, heliconias, tumeric and galangal. If nothing else they provide more mulch and create a good barrier.

Whatever I plan for the bed in the future, I also scatter a variety of flower seeds like marigolds, cosmos, ageratum, zinnias and salvias, plus dill and coriander in the dry season. It keeps the bees, the beneficial insects and me happy.

Then I just stand back for a while and let things grow. Soon I am able to cut some greens for the chooks, some greens for the table like mallow and amaranth, basil and chillies for curries, cherry tomatoes and beans. As everything gets bigger I turn a lot of the initial seedlings into mulch. I chop the pigeon pea leaning out onto the path; I leave the crotolaria that shelters the tree from wind or afternoon sun, but not the one competing with it; I leave the cherry tomato I can easily reach come harvest time, but not the one threatening to smother the marigolds and so on.

In the beginning a bed may look a complete mess, everything stressed and struggling, chewed by bugs and only good for (or particularly good for) chook food. But mulch breaks down very quickly in this climate. And the decomposing mulch and the roots of the plants encourage microbes and fungi associated with the plants' root system.

The micro-organisms in turn improve the soil and look after the plants.

My experience over the years has taught me that up here no site preparation, however thorough and careful it is, can achieve the same results. Just fertilising simply won't do the same job. Take the above mentioned passionfruit vine. Passionfruit love nitrogen. But passionfruit grown on a trellis and fed well with nitrogen-rich fertiliser will never be as healthy as one clambering over a wattle tree. The micro-organisms associated with the wattle's roots are the key. And remember I said termites love pigeon pea and crotolaria? I noticed that, once a bed has been established for a while, termites don't bother new seedlings any more.

Believe me, you will notice the difference when things really get going.

Then, and only then, is the time to make room for all the other wonderful vegetables like French beans, capsicums, cucumbers, sweet corn, Chinese greens, spinach, rocket, cabbage, kale, herbs like borage, parsley, sage, thyme, more delicate flowers and trees...

I could go on forever and in my garden I do. Looking at the diversity of it you wouldn't suspect that every bed started out the same way. There is the banana patch, the orchard, keyhole and mandala gardens and colour coordinated flower and vegie beds. I even have some vegetables growing in rows!

But mostly I grow things haphazardly everywhere to see where they are happiest (Mediterranean species during the dry season and tropical varieties during the wet). I mix them to confuse the pests and grow too much of everything so I can share it with the wildlife and cut it for use as mulch. Sometimes I help things along with some dynamic lifter or fish fertiliser (bananas and pawpaws will need it). During the wet season with its continuous rains I let the garden turn into a thick jungle because nutrients tied up in plant matter can't leach away.

Come the dry season, I open the canopy up again, leaving a thick blanket of mulch on the ground and another cycle starts with ever-improving vigour, disease resistance and productivity, telling me that I am on the right track.



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CONVINCING CLAY

— PART THREE —

Every house benefits from having the walls rendered with clay, according to Frank and Ingrid, who have many years of experience as natural home builders. In the third of this four part series the couple describe, in practical detail, their favorite clay render.

by Frank Thomas and Ingrid Leusch

St. Georges Basin, New South Wales.

Rendering with clay

Clay plasters are usually made up from fatty clay which can be made leaner with sand or fibres to a suitable product. It is important to get the clay content of the mix right because if it is too lean the binding power and compressibility are reduced and if it is too fat shrinkage cracks will create a problem.

Some literature suggests that it is not advisable to enrich lean clay; however, we regularly add Bentonite to lean clay and this practice has worked very well.

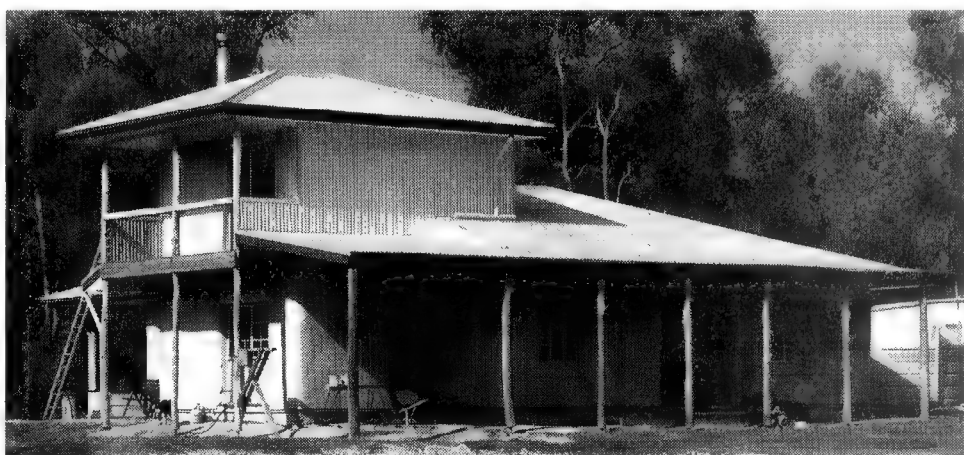
Because of the difficulty identifying a soil's suitability for rendering or building purposes we believe it is crucial that a ready-made product is made available at building supply outlets and hardware shops. For clay to become a mainstream rendering product and to be recommended by architects and engineers as first choice, it has to be standardised and made safe, easy and enjoyable to obtain and use. Engineered clay is used every day to manufacture bricks and tiles as well as for making pottery; therefore, designing a clay render mix should be possible without too much difficulty. Standards for testing soil for engineering purposes exist in Australia and many other countries; these could probably be used or extended to test soil for rendering purposes.

Bagged rendering mixes from clay and natural fibres are readily available in Germany and some other

European countries, making clay a much more popular building material there. With standard clay building materials, product information about ingredients, performance, application procedures and maintenance requirements would also be given. Knowing how to use the product, how it will perform and ensuring uniformity in appearance with a standard product would eliminate the need for time consuming experiments with sample batches of soil. We believe that readily available, standard clay building products would make the use of clay more attractive and could provide a real choice for people, even those without any experience working with clay.

We will now finally describe our rendering techniques and mixtures. Please remember that these are guidelines only and no guarantee can be given that these will work unless you are using suitable and tested materials and follow proper application techniques. With most of our projects we have used engineered clay and other well-tried products which our company can supply if required.

Assuming you have a suitable clay, we recommend the following render mix ratios for the specific coats. Please note that the mix for the first coat, also referred to as scratch or slip coat, varies, depending on whether it is applied by hand tools or spray rendering equipment. Also,



**Finished render
on a house at Glen Innes.**

the following mixes and application procedures are only relevant when rendering strawbales. Rendering techniques for other surfaces will follow.

First coat applied by hand tools

Clay and water only, mixed into a slippery, sticky blend with a consistency of smooth chocolate milk or runny custard. If applied by hand tools such as wide paint brushes or hand brushes make sure that it is thrown onto the bales with some force in order to penetrate into the strawbale as much as possible.

First coat applied by spray rendering pump

Because the pump provides the force it is possible to apply the first coat much thicker than with hand tools. The ratio of clay to brickie's sand we use here is 1:1, and the consistency of the mix can be compared to thick, grainy custard.

Second coat (also often referred to as base, main or brown coat)

The ratio here is the same for trowel or pump application.

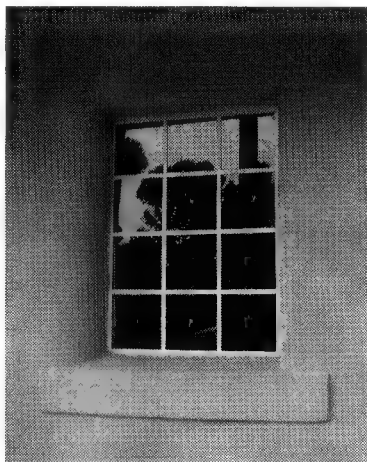
Clay to brickie's sand in a ratio of 1:2–3 mixed into a consistency which will not run off the trowel. If in a wheelbarrow you should be able to scoop it up easily with the trowel, but it should be solid enough to not run off the tools and not slide down the vertical wall surface. The consistency reminds us of a sandy sourdough bread mix. The mix is right if it has a sandy feel, but it should also be sticky due to adequate clay content.

Third coat, also called top coat or finish coat

This coat is usually about two to five mm thick; all coats together add up to an average thickness of 35 to 45 mm.

The mix for the finish coat is clay and washed beach

sand in a ratio of 1:1.5. This coat is always applied with hand tools. It has a smooth and easy to work consistency. We use a finer and lighter engineered clay for this application. The soil used for the top coat contains a clay content of about five to eight per cent as compared to the scratch coat where clay content can be up to 50 per cent. The clay gradually should become leaner with subsequent coats to avoid shrinkage cracks. This translates into the coats becoming softer from the inside to the outside. The top coat provides a smooth and light finish which can be easily painted. Only natural paint products (coloured with pigments if required) should be used to maintain the vapour permeability and natural beauty of the clay render. Please visit www.naturalpaint.com.au for more information on a wide range of natural paint products. Pigments may also be added to the render mix. However, it has to be kept in mind that when using natural products colour variations may result in subsequent mixes or when doing repair or maintenance work on the plasters at some later stage.



Window detail, Glen Innes house.

Externally we usually recommend a finish coat of lime render for extra protection from driving and splashing rain and hail. This applies unless the walls are very well protected by roof overhangs, off-ground foundations or wide verandas. The Vipassana Meditation Centre in the Blue Mountains, NSW, (see our website www.strawtec.com.au) is an example of an exclusively clay-rendered strawbale structure. The walls are well protected by verandas but please remember that it is extremely important to further protect the plaster with paint. We recommend a natural and vapour-permeable product such as casein paint, pit lime paint or a lime wash; all of these should be applied in three coats.

The external lime render finish coat is made up from slaked quick lime and washed beach sand at a ratio of 1:3–4. We usually mix a small amount of clay, approximately 10 per cent of the lime quantity, into this lime render finish; this practice has proved to make the plaster slightly stronger. This finish coat is about six to eight mm thick and is applied with hand tools. We will not go into much detail about rendering with lime in this article; however, please keep in mind that slaking quick lime requires some skill and is dangerous, as the material gets very hot during the chemical reaction with water. It is possible to use other lime products such as hydrated lime but we do not recommend these products as they tend to be more brittle, less flexible and weaker than quick lime.

Historic lime renders analysed in Germany showed small amounts of clay included in the plaster. It has been suggested that clay may have been added to provide some extra bonding strength to the lime plasters.

Before applying lime render over the base coat of clay we apply a bridging coat made up from lime putty. This is a runny mix of one litre of lime putty with 14 litres of water; it



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can be brushed or sprayed on. Note: if sprayed on the lime putty should be strained through several layers of hessian (or similar material) to remove any lumpy bits that may have sunk to the bottom of the vessel containing the material. We have found that, possibly due to different tension stresses during the setting periods of the two materials, the lime coat has been rejected and fallen off the clay base in some patches. With the thin bridging coat this has not happened again.

We do not usually mix lime into our clay renders. In traditional Japanese plasters this has been done, but only a maximum of five per cent of lime has been added so that the surface can be polished to a shiny finish. We do not recommend adding more lime to any clay render mix. These Japanese finishes are usually only applied internally unless the walls are very well protected.

Lime render reacts with carbon dioxide from the air to form the compound CaCO_3 . Moisture is needed for this chemical reaction to happen and the setting or curing process of lime plasters is slow. To allow lime render to cure it is important to keep the render moist for at least one week. It is best not to apply lime render in hot and dry weather. If the weather turns hot and dry after you have rendered, the walls should be moistened with a mist of clean water three to four times a day. Hessian can be hung from the gutters to provide shade and the material can also be kept wet. For the first week the wall should also be protected from driving rain and hail as these may damage the surface. The main curing time for lime render is about four to six weeks. However, the material takes up to three years to reach its hardest state. Before the lime top coat goes on the base coat of clay the base coat itself also needs to be protected from driving and splashing rain to avoid wash out. Again, lengths of hessian hung down from the gutters can be used to do this job. No plaster should ever be

applied if frost is expected.

Because the structural soundness of a plaster depends largely on the background and bonding between coats we take particular care with this issue — that is, application of bridging coats between different materials, normally no lime to be mixed into clay and so on. It is also important that a coat of plaster has thoroughly dried before applying a subsequent coat and only the surface of the dried out plaster coat is wetted with a fine mist of water before applying a new coat. The first thin coat or scratch coat of clay render usually displays cracks because a strong clay is used and no or little sand has been added to make the mix leaner. The cracks and only thinly coated straw provide a good key for the second coat. A key between second and third coats is supplied by grooves scratched into the surface in a criss-cross or diamond pattern of the second coat when it is semi-dry. A hayfork or similar can be used to scratch grooves into the plaster about ten mm deep.

Render materials should be mixed slowly. More water added to the mix to speed up the procedure will only

result in more cracks. Instead of adding water, take more time in mixing and a better product will result. Water will move slowly between the clay particles and will be absorbed over time, giving clay the plasticity and bonding power so desirable for good rendering results. Mixing the plaster materials for ten minutes or more has proved to be a good guideline for integration of the materials.

We start rendering from the top of the wall working our way down to the bottom. This is done because water contained in the render mix moves downwards and would cause the render at the bottom to stay very wet for an extended period. Also, if some render material falls from the upper parts of the wall, damage or soiling of lower parts of render can be avoided.



The Truth Window at Falls Creek shows 35 to 45 mm overall thickness of render.

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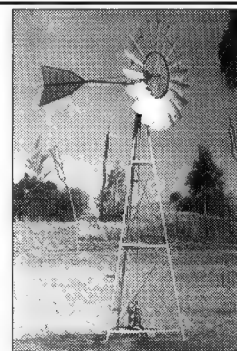
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Earth People Write continued from page 6

Horse manure in the vegie garden

Dear Earth Garden,

Great magazine, good read. In EG 133 *Earth People Write*, Evette asks about the use of horse droppings in her vegie garden.

At a lecture I once attended on horse care, the speaker said worms were a problem with horses and all horses on the east coast of Australia could be considered infested, and required treatment with a wormicide every month.

This wormicide chemical will pass into the droppings and if used in the garden could decimate earthworm population. As earthworms assist bacteria in transforming vegetable matter into plant food, and are also a source of enriching soil with nitrogen, wormicides could have a considerable effect on soil fertility. The effect of wormicides on humans is an unknown quantity, considering horses are much bigger and stronger than us, probably three times our adult human bulk and quantity of blood. Our children have a quarter or a third the amount of adult human blood. Any chemical in children including sugar and salt is much more concentrated.

Ask the manager for dates when he or she used wormicide. Allow at least a couple of days either side for human error and do not use the droppings of that period. Providing stables are cleaned regularly, droppings at safe times should be OK.

Kel Connell, Karuah, NSW.

Rare seeds

Dear Editor,

I read your magazine for the first time today: mmm, very interesting. I was wondering could you tell me where one could find rare seed suppliers for rare herb, fruit and vegies. We already have catalogues from Eden Seeds, Pleasance Herbs, Riverhouse, New Gippsland, Diggers Club and Greenpatch. But we are after rarer seed, like you talk about in your March-May issue, which is the one we have from the library, about Queensland raspberry, and jack fruit. But more to the point, you have an article in that issue from a man who deals in rare vegies. Perhaps you could email me back, as we are keen growers, currently growing over 60 varieties of herbs for markets. Thanks.

Tammy Hendy, Hillbilly Seedlings, PO Box 380, Nerang, Qld 4211, hseedlings@hotmail.com

Dear Tammy,

The following are a couple of suppliers you might like to try:

Green Harvest www.greenharvest.com.au, Daleys Fruit Nursery www.daleysfruit.com.au who have jackfruit and Atherton raspberry, The Seed Savers' Network, www.seedsavers.net, PO Box 975 Byron Bay, NSW 2481.

Building with termite mounds

Dear Earth Garden family,

Thank you to Alan and all involved in the production of this wonderful magazine and to all the contributors who fill the pages with their treasures.

I would like to connect with any readers who have had experience building with antbed (termite mound). I have spoken with many people who are familiar with antbed floors or tennis courts, and am particularly interested in three dimensional construction, ovens, houses, etc. I appreciate you taking the time to write and look forward to reading your stories. Thank you,

Lisa, c/- 16 Blantyre Close, Manunda, Qld, 4870.

Care with public planting

Dear Earth Garden,

I am writing in response to the article (Mrs Resourceful) EG 133 mentioning that Maryanne has planted non-native and non-indigenous plants in her local park to brighten it up.

The thing is that she may be introducing plants that may, or will, take over our natives; they become noxious and unsightly in natural bushland.

Along the Mornington Peninsula where I live the beachside cliffs and surrounds have a lot of introduced species that have been dumped or planted, so in my opinion leave it to the council to plan and revegetate our parklands and reserves. This will also save money and the chemicals our councils use on introduced plants and weeds.

Thanks *Earth Garden* for a wonderful magazine full of interesting articles and ideas.

Sarah, Mt. Martha, Vic.

Contacts and knowhow on living simply

Dear folks at Earth Garden,

I have been going through my back copies of *Earth Garden* and as I have to travel to Melbourne on the bus today and also as it is very wintry (rain, yeehah!!), I grabbed the June-Aug 2004 issue to look at, and Alan's editorial grabbed me and made me put pen to paper.

His letter highlights our (people's)

problems in modernday city life, the perceived wants and needs in our consumerist society (like plasma TV). "It's not objects and things that give you lasting happiness — it's experiences", he says. I had planned to write you an email, but Alan's editorial spurred in me an urge to write the real way. Handwritten (on the bus), posted and delivered by a real person. Emails just seem so impersonal, no thought really goes into writing them; they are often riddled with grammar and spelling mistakes; we tend to just whip up a few lines and send them off without thinking. When you sit down and write a letter there is so much more of us in it, we ponder over the words, reflect, we think about it. We relax and take time and by writing a letter we can actually help keep people in jobs (imagine not having a postie!). It is these last two points that Alan identifies as some of the city versus country living issues — not having time in the city and no jobs in the country.

Anyway, that wasn't really my intention for writing, but Alan really got me thinking. I will say one last thing on the matter — there is something about the city that makes you want and miss the country (even the 'country' of a large town like Bendigo), but I couldn't tell you what one thing it was — maybe it's the silence — there is never any silence in or around Melbourne.

What I was hoping for from yourselves and my fellow readers is some advice or recommendations. My sister and I are avid small farm dreamers. One day in the hopefully near future we'd like to have a small property with orchards, dams, ducks, chooks, geese, pigs, house cow and goat, vegies and so forth. Can anyone suggest a good all round book that can give us guidance when it all happens and give us dreaming matter in the meantime? We'd most likely end up south of Bendigo somewhere.

I am also interested in learning animal husbandry, bee keeping and traditional bush and farm skills such as fencing, paling, blacksmithing, milking and so on. Does anyone know where or how I can get involved and learn these skills?

Also a question for Jackie — I'd love to see your property and do a writing workshop. Any info on these? (PS Love *Valley of Gold*!)

My last question is more of a comment. I'm doing my one-year Primary Teaching degree and plan to be back in Bendigo from mid-November. My undergraduate degree is in Applied Science (Parks, Recreation & Heritage). Does anyone out there have volunteer or paid work from that date onwards that needs someone who loves the environment and loves teaching (and learning?) Anything really. I'd also love to get involved in helping small communities either in Australia

or overseas with anything such as setting up schools, gardens, co-ops, and the like. Pretty much what I'd love most is for people to write to me with their ideas, dreams, knowledge and stories. I need to connect to real people and would love some penfriends!

It's still raining through the countryside — a lovely sight! Three cheers for the country, let's look after it and each other.

PS Some late questions: where can we get heirloom/old fashioned fruit and vegetable seeds and plants? Anyone know how to make elderflower cordial? Can you eat fresh cannellini, flageolet, pinto, kidney, chick peas/beans and how/where do you get seed — would dried ones work? PPS Sorry to hear about Trentham's Cosmopolitan — what a great pub and lovely historical place.

Lisa Gormley, Unit 2, 18 Spring Hill Drive, Spring Gully, Vic. 3550 Email: mycrazykat@yahoo.com.au.

Dear Lisa,

You could try *'The New Complete Book of Self-Sufficiency'* (see the *Good Life Book Club* list at the back of this issue). For experience and skills you could consider *woofing* (WWOOF — Willing Workers on Organic Farms). Contact WWOOF Australia, W Tree, Buchan, Victoria, 3885, phone (03) 5155 0218.

Handy hint: cockroach trap

Dear Earth Garden,

Smear some butter around the inside top half of an old jam jar: the critters climb in and get no traction to get out. It fills up nightly. No poisons.

Mm, (do I get a free subscription??). Cheers.

Mark, from the web.

Thanks for the Baxter story

Dear Earth Garden,

Having read the letters in the latest edition, I felt compelled to let you know that I found the first-hand account of the politically-driven debacle at Baxter very interesting. Of course there are many views on this, but Bob Rich's account was the first time I had read something from someone involved. I was a little surprised to see it in the magazine but why not? Our news media are so controlled by conservative forces that unless we resort to the internet for alternative news we have little opportunity to hear another view.

I believe that environmental protection, biodiversity and all the other anti-capitalist principles such as the sustainable, diversified production of power are all essentially political (life is politics, politics are life). Our current governments encourage more consumption of scarce resources and

environmental destruction because their political agenda is extremely conservative. As long as our true political masters are large corporations nothing will change and as long as we continue to accept economic growth as desirable, including its indicators of car registrations and house building, we will not progress.

A few of us will try to tread the earth lightly but most people in the western world don't and have no intention of doing so. Greed, competition and consumption are positively encouraged by incumbent governments who continue in place because they are rewarded by increasingly comfortable voters encouraged to continue their credit card spending. Until a brave and dedicated government changes the economic indicators by factoring in environmental damage to give a true picture we will continue on this path of self-destruction. To effect change, political action is necessary.

Bob Rich's article was an insider's comment on what is happening in this country as a result of the hands-off, election-driven approach of a government so conservative that Malcolm Fraser looks like Ben Chifley. To me his views are relevant in the wider context of the politics of sustainable living and planet care.

Name and Address supplied.

Global contacts for women and men

Dear Readers,

I am a faithful and constant reader of *Earth Garden* and often, whilst reading the letters in EG, people have written with interesting information, that has been so helpful over the years.

In turn I would like to write and tell you about a great organization called W5, or 'Women Welcome Women'. Their website for information is <http://www.womenwelcomewomen.org.uk>.

Recently W5 celebrated its twenty first anniversary. The organization caters for members to stay at other members' homes, sometimes including points of cultural interest and sights of the member's home town. It is a global organisation promoting friendship and understanding around the world. W5 has developed into a 3,000-member organisation in all parts of the world. You can be a visitor or a host, husbands welcome too!! There is no obligation.

My experience firstly was a phone call from a member asking me to the Armidale University Restaurant where I met dozens of women from all over the world, doing an 'Oz Autumn Tour'. Later, in Glasgow, I met up with a Glasgow member and spent a wonderful two days at her home and, joining up with another member from

Finland, we toured the sights of Glasgow. We saw far more than we would have on our own, due to our host's incredibly valuable knowledge of timetables and places of interest.

There are W5 gatherings in every country; maybe there is a local group near you. If you're travelling Oz or overseas this organisation is a must. (You do not have to be involved or obligated being a member in any way, except pay yearly dues). It is non-profit and the newsletter gives information on places to rent or swap, classes in cooking or French, painting holidays, and underwater snorkelling at the Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba, Egypt!! Most members speak multiple languages.

Another organisation worthy of mention is SERVAS; it was originally formed in the 1960s, I think. The cost is \$40 to join, money going to Peace charities. You get an individual book on each country you nominate to visit, no matter how many countries. These books have names and addresses for contacts to stay and people who are also SERVAS members. This group is also global. I did join but never got to use SERVAS; look up this group on the computer. If you would like further information, please send a SAE for a reply.

Mari, PO Box 27, Kootingal, NSW 2352.

Baxter protest

Dear Folks,

I confess that I was surprised by the complaints about Bob Rich's Baxter article. They seemed to me to be symptomatic of a desire among certain areas of the alternative lifestyle movement to believe that if we just ignore the big, bad, nasty, outside world for long enough, it will somehow just go away and leave us in peace on our few acres of paradise.

The awkward truth is that we are involved in the world whether we like it or not, and that world is as it is, not as we might like it to be. People commit acts of unbelievable cruelty every day, and thousands of millions live and die in desperate misery. If the complainants want to retire from the world and pretend it's not happening, then I suppose they have a right to do so, but it's an attitude I find cowardly and, ultimately, self-defeating.

I don't suppose I'm alone in finding the circus of emotional losers, intellectual minnows and moral bankrupts in Canberra repellent, but I'd much rather be kept informed of their misdeeds than abuse the messenger who tells me about them.

Thanks for the excellent magazine, by the way, and keep up the good work. Please don't let yourselves be bullied into becoming just another dopey, self-indulgent lifestyle mag, like so many others we know of. Peace and happiness to all.

EARTH GARDEN REVIEWS

BOOKS AND MUSIC

Edited by Judith Gray



Pruning Handbook
by **Fiona Hopes**
Published by **Hachette**
Illustrated (UK)
Soft cover,
medium format,
full colour, 191 pages
\$29.95*

With over 250 plants featured, this truly is the most comprehensive pruning book in a long time. Fiona doesn't assume you have prior knowledge. She takes you through step by step, starting with the tools you will need through to pruning

plants of all shapes, sizes and characteristics.

This is the book that makes the reason for pruning central. Fiona says "pruning is the systematic cutting away of parts of a living plant for our own objectives and purposes. It's an art and a science..." Pruning is about seeing the potential of a plant. It is in fact a living form of sculpture. With cutters in hand and this book in the other, fruit tree pruning starts to make sense.

Study the chapter on principles and techniques before you take on the specific chapters on roses, trees, shrubs, perennials, climbers, hedges and fruit trees. Know why you are pruning. Is it to regenerate an old plant or remove disease? Is it to reduce the size or simply train the plant? Once you have decided, use Fiona's basic eight principles of pruning.

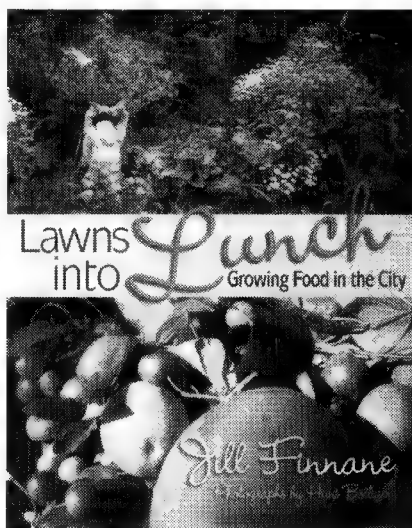
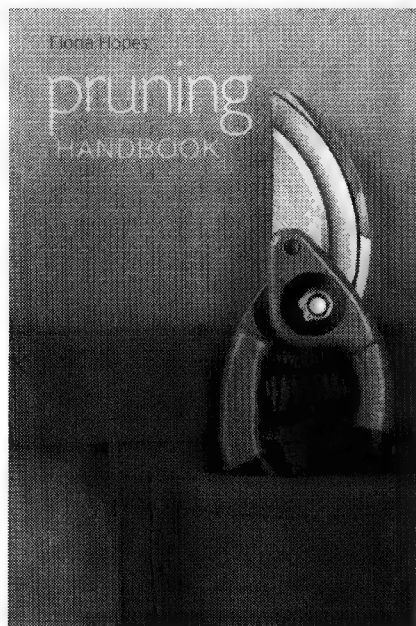
1. Remove dead, diseased or crossing growths.
2. Let in light and air.
3. Take out the old and let in the new.
4. Aim for a natural effect.
5. Leave wood to grow for next year.
6. Cut to a bud.
7. Cut up before cutting down.
8. Hide wounds.

This book is jammed with detailed photographs and diagrams. Each chapter has a list of species discussed and a complete descrip-

tion on how to prune each species. When to prune, how to prune and why to prune. It's all here.

Lawns Into Lunch
(Growing Food in the City)
by **Jill Finnane**
Published by
New Holland
Full colour, A4,
soft cover, 144 pages
\$29.95*

Don't be misled by the title of this book. It is a basic permaculture guide. Through her interviews with twenty-two gardeners, Jill Finnane is able to explore some simple per-



maculture ideas.

This book is living proof that it doesn't matter what walk of life you come from, all gardeners are bonded in some way. The common passion for growing food in your available space breaks down barriers and creates friends amongst us all. This book is about twenty-two people who discovered the growing desire within themselves, and reading their stories is like chatting with good friends.

Jill is a committed organic gardener. She practises and teaches permaculture and is a strong believer in turning problems into solutions. For example, why try to reclaim boggy ground when it could become a swamp garden, abundant with frogs?

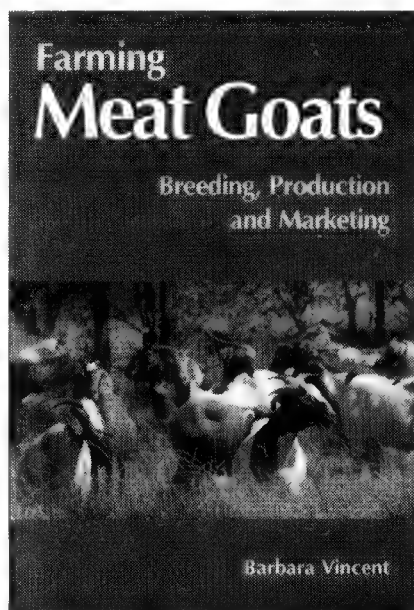
This book is in fact a fascinating collection of interviews that cover quite a cross-section of the Australian population. From a nomadic student incorporating found objects into his garden to bush gardeners, not to mention Housing Commission flats turned into productive Burmese-style food gardens. How tremendous it is to see people using what is available to them, and most importantly, how they learn on the way.

The common theme throughout this book is how each gardener has observed their own eco-system evolving. Each has learned how best to make the most of it, making this a perfect book for children as well as adults.

Soil, pests, predators and micro-climates seem all-important, but this book demonstrates the need for enthusiasm and a commitment to sustainability to make food production a local issue and fun as well.

Throughout this book are loads of tips such as how to rotate crops, what worms really like and how to make the most of limited sunlight. Go to the green symbols dotted throughout the book for a crash course in permaculture principles.

This is an inspiring road and a real *Earth Garden* springtime wake-up call.



Farming Meat Goats (Breeding, production and marketing)

by Barbara Vincent

Published by

CSIRO Publishing

**Soft cover, 288 pages,
black & white**

\$64.95*

Author Barbara Vincent has been a livestock consultant for more than 15 years. She has been closely involved in breeding programs. It is obvious from the information in this book that she has a complete understanding of both small- and large-scale farming.

Goat meat is growing in popularity and is becoming an important export industry. This book is the complete guide to all aspects of the industry from breeding to marketing. It covers selecting and preparing a property, choosing stock, breeding, health care, drought feeding and, of course, marketing.

It is a misconception that goats have a 'cast-iron' gut. Barbara explains in great detail the effects of poisonous plants on goats. Did you know that some foods eaten by humans will kill goats? This includes avocados (they contain a cardiac glycoside).

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Ensure all goat feed is stored in a dry, appropriate way as mould or fungal toxins can be just as serious.

In keeping with more CSIRO publications, this book has a scientific bent and is perfect for someone who is already involved in the industry or for those who want to get serious.

More Strawbale Building (A complete guide to designing and building with straw)

by **Chris Magwood,**

Peter Mack and

Tina Therrien

Published by

New Society Publishers

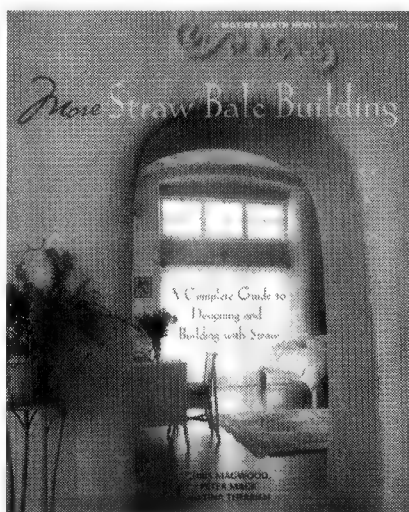
Soft cover, A4,

277 pages,

black & white

(6 feature colour pages)

\$49.95*



It is important to note that this book is an American publication, but it is an absolutely comprehensive guide on how to build in strawbale. Starting from the ground up this book is about sustainable construction in general. With a strong emphasis on planning and plenty of practical experience, this book is a must for any potential builder.

The book is much more than a builder's companion: in fact, it's not until chapter 18 that the issue of laying

strawbales is discussed! This is a comprehensive study in the total make-up of a building project. It considers appropriate design and drawing of plans. Learn about passive solar principles and cost-effective materials. How do you build your footings? What kind of roof do you need and how will you plaster your house? The list goes on. Most importantly, learn how to budget and stay on budget.

I really like the way this book encourages the baler to think outside the square. Create curved walls by whacking your bales. Create unique spaces. This can happen spontaneously; however, it's usually best to plan ahead of time.

I'm sure most strawbalers would agree that it's time to have a party when you get your building permit. On the brink of your building adventure, no doubt you have been through the hoops to get that permit, so blow off some steam.

***Books marked with an asterisk are available from The Good Life Book Club by phoning (03) 5424 1814.**

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Unclassifieds are \$1.00 (including GST) per word prepaid. This cost now includes your advertisement on the *Earth Garden* website at www.earthgarden.com.au for three months. Bookings for the MARCH 2006 issue should arrive at PO Box 2 Trentham, 3458, by 1 FEBRUARY 2006 or www.earthgarden.com.au (Secure payment by credit card is also available at the website.)



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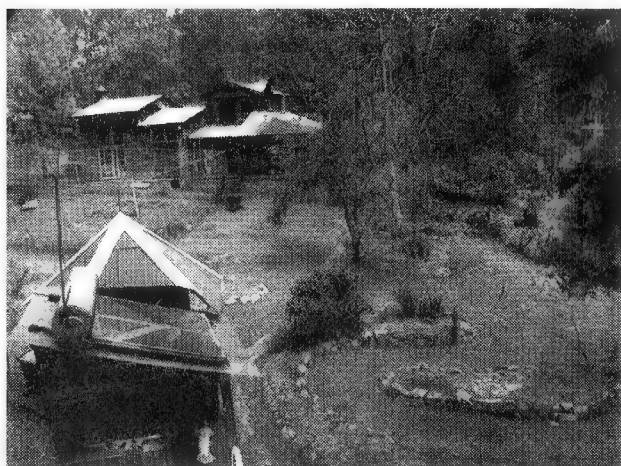
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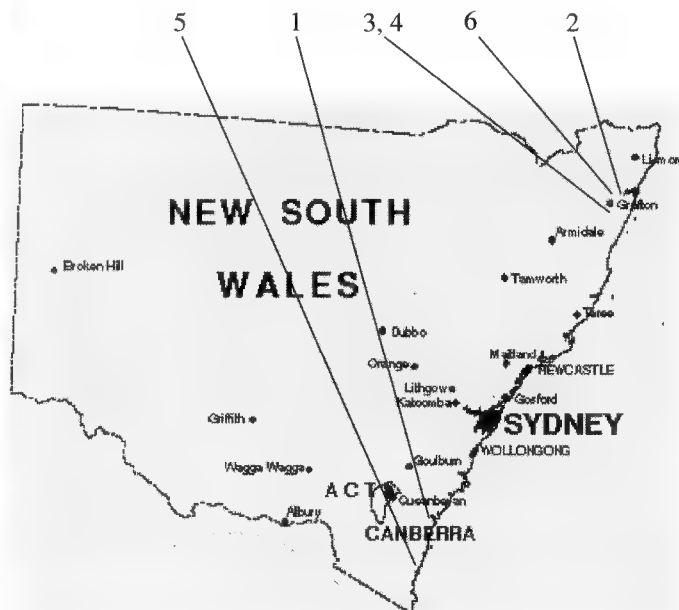
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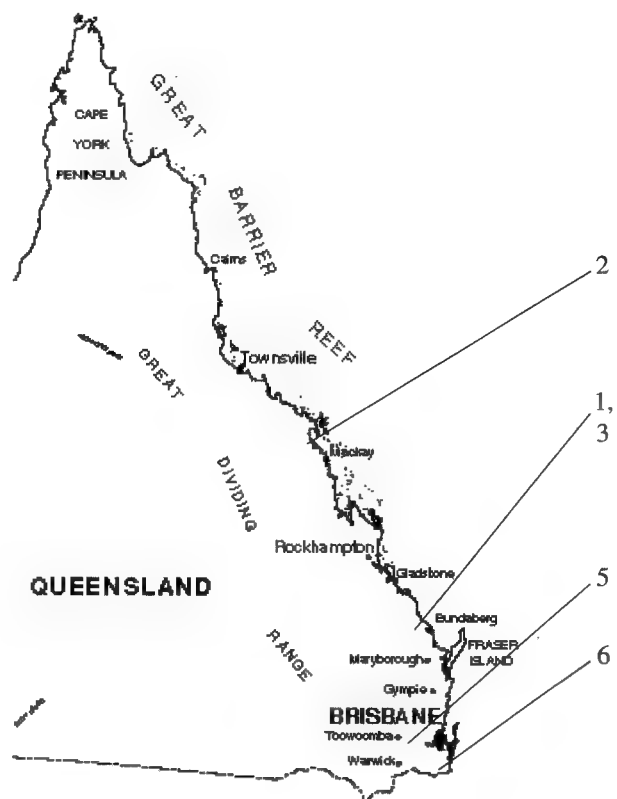
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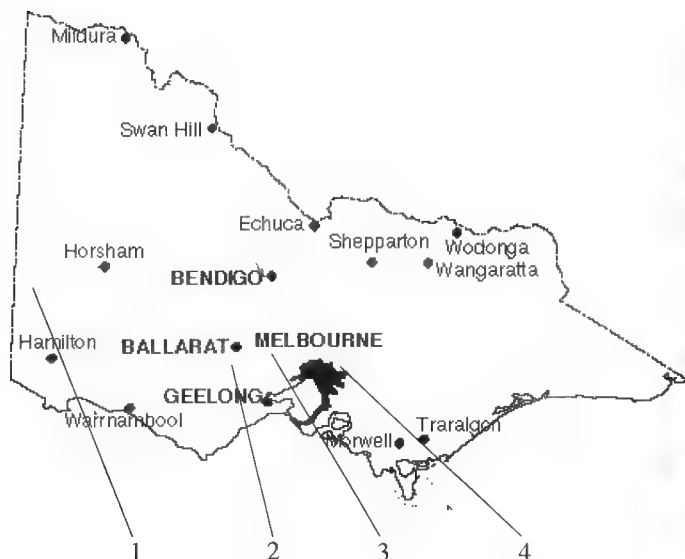
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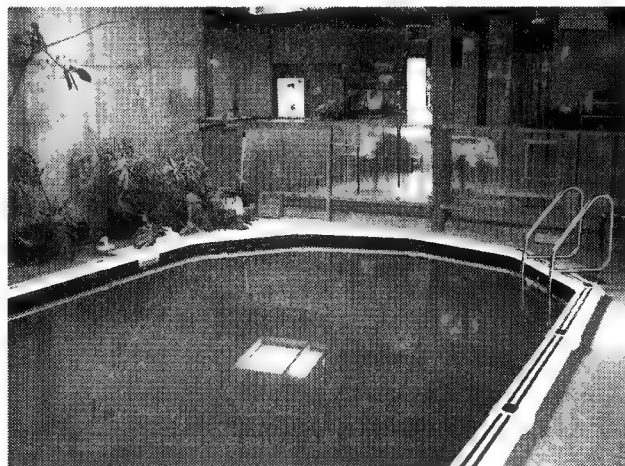
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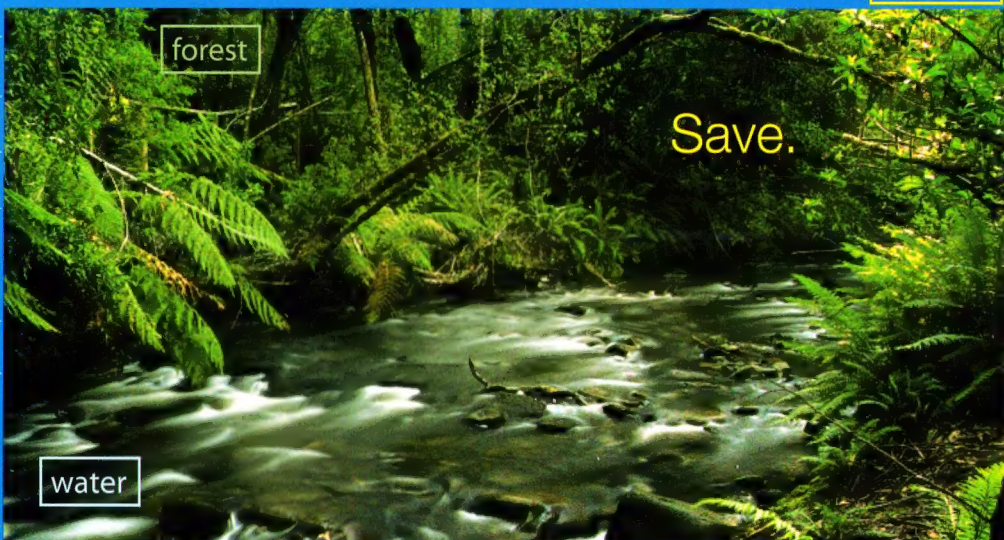
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Bob Brown's out on a limb

Senator Brown is personally taking Forestry Tasmania to court over the logging of endangered species habitat in Wielangta's oldgrowth forests in eastern Tasmania.

BOB URGENTLY NEEDS YOUR HELP!

The legal and scientific costs will top \$250,000.

PLEASE help support Bob as he goes out on a limb to protect rare Australian creatures like the Swift Parrot, Tasmanian Wedgetailed Eagle and Wielangta Stag Beetle.

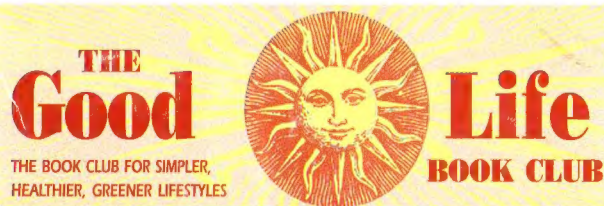
Donations can be made to:

RJ Brown Forest Account

A/C No: 633 000 125133793 Bendigo Bank

To make an on-line donation, to find out more about the legal case, or for more information, go to www.bobbrown.org.au

From January 1st 2006, you will also be able to place a bid on Bob's personal art and artifacts, to be auctioned to raise funds for Wielangta.



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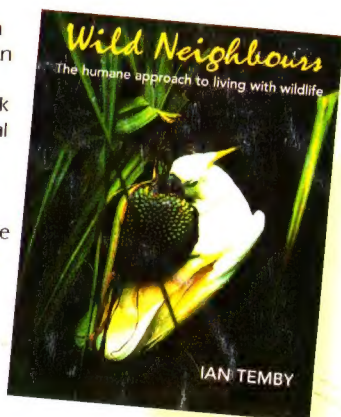
SPRING & SUMMER 2005

Wild Neighbours

Ian Temby

\$36.00 inc GST

How do you deal kindly with possums in the roof, marauding cockatoos, a snake in the grass, rats in the ceiling, or even a Tassie devil under your house? This book offers expert know-how, and some lateral thinking for harmonious solutions to living with wildlife in the suburbs or the bush. The book is a treasure trove of practical and field-tested Australian advice from an experienced expert. Fascinating reading. 250 pages.



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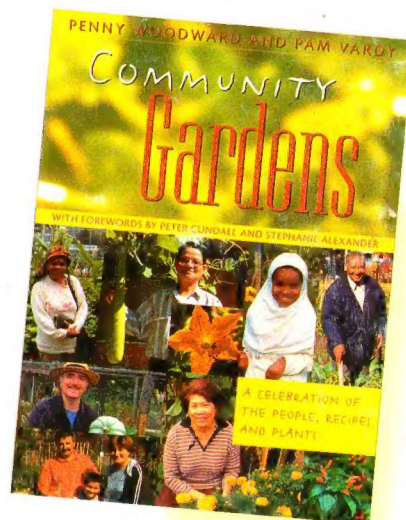
Community Gardens

Penny Woodward and

Pam Vardy

\$28.00 inc GST

Unusual edible plants abound in this fascinating new book from acclaimed author, Penny Woodward. The book is chockful of simple, homestyle recipes provided by the diverse range of people who grow these food plants in their inner city, community gardens. The profiles of the people are delightful and their homegrown food growing — and eating — wisdom is a treasure. A delightful and important book for modern Australian home food growing. 164 pages.



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